

Count Erbach

A STORY OF THE

REFORMATION

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COUNT ERBACH

A Story of the Reformation

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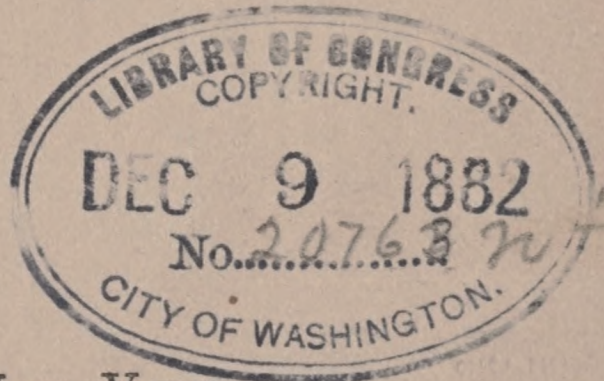
ARMIN STEIN *psued*

Nietschmann, Hermann Otto

BY

JAMES I. HELM, D.D.

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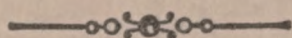
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CONTENTS.



CHAP.	PAGE
I. TWO PILGRIMS	I
II. IN THE EPISCOPAL PALACE	11
III. WITH THE VENDER OF INDULGENCES	22
IV. AT HOME	35
V. DISTURBED PEACE	44
VI. WITTENBERG HAMMER BLOWS	59
VII. THE SPARKS IGNITE	79
VIII. STILL ANOTHER FIRE	97
IX. NEW CLOUDS	106
X. AN INQUISITOR'S PROCESS	120
XI. THE LAST OF HIS LINE	127
XII. A CRUSHED AND TORN HEART	141
XIII. BLIND ZEAL	150
XIV. ONE BLOW AFTER ANOTHER	161
XV. THE ANGEL OF CONSOLATION	169
XVI. MEETING AGAIN	177
XVII. EVIL COUNSEL	196
XVIII. SUCCESS TO THE JOURNEY	209
XIX. ON AN EVIL WAY	226
XX. OVERCOME	232
XXI. A HAPPY HOUSE	252

COUNT ERBACH.

CHAPTER I.

TWO PILGRIMS.

IT was a delightful June morning of the year 1517. The uprising sun threw his roseate beams like outspread fingers through the shady green of the fir-trees and awoke amid the branches the brisk people of the feathery kingdom, who forthwith shook the slumber from their eyes and poured forth their morning joy in a volume of deafening melody. The forest breathed perfume from many thousand flower-cups, to each of which night had given a bridal ornament,—a pearly dewdrop of purest liquid, bright and sparkling as a diamond. These jewels, like tears of joy in the floweret eye, smiled forth upon the world, which, kissed to wakefulness by the Creator's breath, shone with new splendor. From the surface of the ground arose, like incense from an altar, a light vapor which vanished in graceful wreaths before the sun's rays.

In the treetops there was a gentle murmur. The hoary giants of the forest were telling each other fairy tales and legends of the mighty past, in mysterious whispers; and the air was so mild, so balmy, and so fragrant, that the world seemed actually to breathe again with a fresher enjoyment of life.

At the castle of Fuerstenau in the Odenwald, the gate opened harshly, the drawbridge was lowered, and two armed men on bounding steeds rode down the steep pathway. Their eyes were fixed intently upon the road; their joyless features were not at all in harmony with the smiling beauty of the morning; and they appeared even to see nothing of the glory of God's world. For in silence, with downcast eyes, they reined in their animated steeds to a gentle and measured step.

They had ridden half an hour when the forest opened; and before them lay, in picturesque beauty, a sunny landscape.

For the first time, on emerging from the forest shade, one of the knights raised his head; and a deep, heavy sigh painfully struggled from his breast. "How beautiful the world is, illumined by God's sun and newly refreshed by His breath! But man's sin is the dismal shadow which darkens all this glory. As through a sombre veil my eyes behold it; for in it the soul, oppressed by sin and guilt, has no peace."

"You speak truly, my lord," replied the other.

“Without peace of soul life is, indeed, a wilderness; and I, too, have amply experienced this spiritual torment. But, praised be the holy Virgin, there is a means of healing for these deepest of all wounds of our life. There in Rome sits the man with the triple crown, a man of flesh and blood like one of us and yet exalted above all mortals, the vicegerent of Christ on earth, the reflection of God’s majesty, for he holds in his hand the keys both of heaven and of hell. What he binds on earth, that is also bound in heaven; and what he looses on earth, that is loosed in heaven also. There he sits, a rich lord with inexhaustible treasure, not of gold and silver alone, which earthly kings also have, but of the heavenly riches, all the merits of the saints acquired by them—over and above their own salvation. There he sits, like a god in human form, and in pity distributes from his wealth to the need and benefit of those who are deficient in virtues of their own. Just at this moment the propitious time has dawned, in which the Holy Father’s goodness visits us, to put the heavenly gifts within easy reach for us. Under the shadow of his banner, men of God are marching through the land whose footsteps drop blessing; for they give remission of all sins great and small. In dense masses people throng to them in order to receive the gift of heaven, and joyfully give in return their worldly substance. I would myself have willingly given twice as much,

if Father Iselin had demanded it; for now my heart is so light and my conscience so free that I look abroad upon the world with entirely different eyes. Whenever doubt and unrest return in my breast, I draw forth at once my letter of indulgence; for there I see, in black and white, made sure by the seal of God's vicegerent, that all my sins are pardoned for fifteen years. Such witness and assurance of the Holy Church cannot deceive, and puts to silence all the accusations of conscience."

Discourse of this kind suited the Count well; for his gloomily contracted eyes gradually brightened to a more cheerful look, and his firmly compressed lips relaxed to a kindly smile. "I am earnestly desirous, my valued Steward, to reach as soon as possible the goal of our pilgrimage; and I should have much preferred, like you, to have applied to the nearest vender of indulgences, Father Iselin, who has his station in the neighborhood of Wuerzburg. Yet the advice of my confessor is wise, that I should seek one more remote; in order that, by a longer pilgrimage, I may do a meritorious work of penitence, and thus enhance the efficacy of the indulgence. It is a long and toilsome way from the Odenwald to the city of Halle in Saxony, where the Dominican Friar John Tetzel at present has his market. But without a murmur will I make this journey; hoping that, for so ear-

nest an act of penitence, the more richly will grace be given me. In the mean time I shall vigorously fast and mortify my body, which is also well pleasing to Almighty God and has a good recompense of reward, as the Holy Church teaches. It is now nine years since, by the expenditure of a considerable sum of money on the crusade against the Russians who were threatening Livonia, I purchased for myself an indulgence of twelve years. The period of the indulgence has not yet expired, but its efficacy is sensibly weakened. For of late I find my conscience uneasy. I know of no other cause or reason whence this arises, unless at that time I took the matter too lightly and have been deficient in a true and honest penance, thinking everything settled by the payment of the money. Although two years ago, together with my wife, I allowed myself to be received into the brotherhood of the preaching friars at Heidelberg, it has never given my soul rest. This time, therefore, will I do an earnest penance and humble myself deeply before God, in order that I may reap a better fruit."

The other knight bent his head in assent. "You will undoubtedly receive the blessing, my gracious lord; for your soul is well prepared."

The travellers rode now into a village which belonged to the dominions of the Count. It was still lying in profound repose: only here and there barked

a dog, roused from his sleep by the tramp of their horses. At the end of the village, however, a door opened and an old peasant in miserable garb, accompanied by a little maiden, issued from the hut.

"Eh, Claus, whither do you hurry so early this morning?" inquired the Count.

"To Father Iselin, my gracious lord," was the old man's reply, who with uncovered head bowed himself humbly to the ground before the Count's horse. "We want to get from the holy man a letter of indulgence; for he is stopping with his precious letters only a few miles from here."

"You are doing just what is right," replied the Count and rode forward.

"But have you also what you will need for the purpose?" he asked, once more turning his horse. "I know that you are poor, and have been visited by many misfortunes."

"I have sold my goat, gracious lord."

"Your last?"

"Yes, the last."

The Count looked compassionately at the old man, thrust his hand quickly into his pocket, threw a shining golden florin into the peasant's hat, at the same time urging his horse to greater speed, in order not to hear the old man's thanks; for willing as he was to dispense benefits, he was equally reluctant to receive the words of gratitude. For the

most part, therefore, he bestowed his alms secretly, that no one might know the giver.

The sun waxed hot as the time advanced, and the lips of the two travellers became dry, so that conversation ceased. Frequently a cool spring bubbled from the shady green hard by the way; but the Count resolutely subdued the natural cravings of the body, while he invited his attendant to enjoy the cooling drink. Hunger also pinched them by the time the sun had reached the zenith; but he overcame victoriously this temptation also when he turned aside to an inn that his companion might take some refreshment.

"How far do you expect to ride to-day?" inquired the latter when they were again in the saddle, after the mid-day respite.

"As far as Wuerzburg," was the answer. "For some time past the highly venerable Bishop has been expecting a promised visit from me; and under his hospitable roof we shall, if possible, seek our nightly rest. He is a noble and worthy dignitary, and sheltered with his blessing, the pilgrimage will be doubly salutary to me."

The conversation of the two knights, under the scorching glow of the noonday sun, became more and more languid; for with each hour the fast was pressing more heavily upon the Count, who was accustomed to good eating and drinking.

As the sun was already below the horizon, and night began to spread her veil upon the weary earth, the Count's travelling companion suddenly raised his arm aloft and cried: "There is Wuerzburg! Praised be the Holy Virgin!"

"Are you weary, Steward?" asked the Count.

"I cannot deny it," replied the other; "for three nights has no sleep visited my eyes."

The Count, nodding to him, smiled: "Then you will make up your loss in the down beds of his Right Reverence. See there the brilliantly lighted windows of the episcopal palace. We shall certainly find the Bishop at home."

After a short and brisk trot, the two held up before the gates of the splendid episcopal edifice, and announced their names and wishes to the porter who opened: "The Count Eberhard of Erbach and his Castle Steward send their greeting to his Episcopal Grace and request a shelter for the present night."

The reader discovers by this announcement with whom he has hitherto been in company; and, while the two knights are waiting before the gate, it is proper that he should have more particular information.

Tall and commanding stood the powerful and muscular form of Count Eberhard. The thirteenth of his name, he was ruler of an extensive domain in

the Odenwald. Every feature in his bronzed and weather-beaten face betokened manly force and earnest purpose: and every motion revealed the man of energetic will, who carried into execution with inflexible persistence what he had once resolved upon and taken in hand; who, for his conviction, went even to abruptness and severity, and if his passion were once aroused, would forget all discretion, all pity. Yet there was nothing cold and repulsive in his nature; for out of his large dark-blue eyes beamed deep thought and warm and tender sensibility. The sight of another's distress could move him even to tears; and he was ever ready to aid with counsel and deed, putting even foes to shame with speedier charity.

From his own expressions we have already perceived him to be a Christian of simple and steadfast faith, submitting himself humbly and unconditionally to the authority of the Church. In his castle of Fuerstenau, the daily life was according to the strictest churchly pattern; and the least offence against the Church was regarded as a sin for which the severest penance was exacted.

The other of the two knights was the Castle Steward of Fuerstenau, Sir Neidhart Faeustlin, also a stout, broad-shouldered figure, as if carved from oak timber, with an expression of emotionless composure and uniform kindliness upon his broad, clean-

shaven face. He had grown gray in the service of his lord; and, on account of his granite fidelity, was the trusted friend of the Count, who esteemed him as a brother, and had him constantly at his side in peace and in battle.

Some considerable time elapsed before the Bishop's servant returned with a pressing invitation to enter the Castle: "His Episcopal Grace would be highly delighted to have the privilege of receiving such worthy guests."

The two friends now rode under the lofty, resounding archway into the courtyard of the Castle, gave their horses to an idly waiting hostler, and followed a page, gayly tripping before them in bright blue velvet livery with silver lace trimming, into the palace; of which the upper row of windows in the main wing poured almost the light of day into the court below.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE EPISCOPAL PALACE.

BISHOP LORENZ of Wuerzburg, descended from the house of Bibra, lived in a dwelling of which a prince need not have been ashamed. Beauty and attractiveness of style vied with the opulence and costliness of the material to furnish a place of residence in which one might live in the most agreeable manner. With astonishment increasing at every step, the Count and his Steward ascended the spacious stairway, laid with rich and varied Turkish carpet, and illuminated with the magic brilliancy of colored chandeliers. After long winding through a succession of apartments, the door opened into a lofty and spacious room, out of which a flood of light from innumerable wax candles fell upon the dazzled eyes. The ceiling of this splendid apartment was supported by columns, the furniture was of ebony, inlaid with silver and upholstered with brown velvet. In the middle a table was spread, on

which, among fragrant bouquets, gold and silver plate sparkled in the light of the candles; and upon the exquisite meats and drinks the statues of gods in pure white marble looked down from the surrounding walls as if in envy.

The company at table was quite small. Around the Bishop sat three ecclesiastics and a lady of distinction. Servants were busily passing in and out.

Bishop Lorenz was a polished gentleman, of noble bearing and a benevolent expression of countenance, with a certain ease of manner and genteel propriety in his gesture, as in his speech. The three other gentlemen looked all very much alike, and disputed with each other the palm in corpulence and obesity of person and deep mahogany color of the face. Among them, as a pure white lily amid flaring roses, was the lady, with her transparent and delicate complexion.

At the entrance of our travellers, the Bishop rose politely from his seat and gave them a cordial reception. "Welcome, my noble lords, to our abode. I had not the least presentiment that we should have the pleasure of seeing this evening at our board two such worthy knights. Franciscus," he called to one of the servants in attendance, "lay two covers and also two goblets for the gentlemen; and you, Melchior, set two chairs. But let me first present my guests: the Abbot Bernhardus of the Bene-

dictine Monastery in this city, and two of the Canons, Anselmus and Thomas, a brother-pair of the house of Weidenheim, together with our worthy lady friend Gertrude of Lauterbach."

The guests named bowed to the strangers, and the latter took their place at the table.

"From whence do you come, my very dear Count?" inquired the Bishop with a friendly smile.

"Direct from Fuerstenau, your Right Reverence."

"Ah, then you have had a long and fatiguing ride; and a meal will be just the thing for you, simple though it be, for we were not expecting such valued guests. Please to help yourselves freely from what is before you."

One of the waiters handed a juicy, well basted joint of roast mutton, whilst another filled the goblets to the brim with noble Margravine.

The Count declined both. "For my Steward these tempting viands will be suitable; but I desire for myself nothing but a crust of dry bread and a mug of water; for I am engaged in a pilgrimage of penance, with the vow of fasting."

The ecclesiastics looked across at the speaker with an expression of astonishment and pity; even the lady fixed the searching gaze of her beautiful and sparkling eyes upon the grave and earnest features of the Count.

The Bishop inclining himself towards the latter,

said: "You have always been true to the vocation of a strict and earnest obedience to the precepts of the Church; and the rigor to which you subject yourself is laudable. What is the goal of your pilgrimage?"

"Halle," replied the Count. "My heart's desire is intent upon forgiveness of sins, which the Dominican Friar, John Tetzel, there dispenses by the plenary authority of the Pope."

The two Canons exchanged furtive glances, and a quiet smile played upon their lips. But the lady bent herself over her plate and handled her knife and fork with energy.

"For what reason have you chosen so distant a vender of indulgences," inquired the Abbot; "since you had a very much nearer and more convenient opportunity? It is, I should think, at the least ten days' ride to Bohemia."

"What do you mean by that, my lord Abbot?" asked the Count in astonishment. "Do you look for Halle in Bohemia? It is situated in Saxony, and can be reached very easily in four days' ride."

"So, so," said the Abbot with a smile of vexation. "One can still learn even in the days of his old age."

The lady, casting a mischievous glance at the Abbot's figure, which bore a striking resemblance to a wine cask, said: "Only it must be somewhat more difficult to recover in old age what one neglected in youth."

The Bishop made a sign of reproof to the lady with his raised finger: "Do you wish to bring up again the old quarrel with his worthiness? Why is it that you two can never understand or abide each other?"

Whilst the Bishop now turned himself adroitly to the Count and engaged him in conversation, one of the Canons, leaning over to the Abbot, whispered in his ear. "She will never forgive you that you want to stand nearer to the Bishop than herself. She would like to be all in all here. Be on your guard before her: for her head is full of subtle designs and spiteful grudges."

The Abbot's red and bloated face became still deeper by a shade. "Ill-starred woman's rule," he muttered between his teeth, and drained the newly filled goblet at a draught.

"That was a splendid feat of yours, my lord Abbot," said Gertrude laughing derisively. "In this noble art you have not an equal in the whole diocese; and the Church is much too parsimonious of her honors and emoluments in comparison with your merits."

The Abbot snapped his humid eyes: "I wish from my heart the Popess Joanna of glorious memory might have a successor from Wuerzburg. I should not then need to concern myself about honors and dignities."

“Bridle your tongues,” cried the Bishop with decision; “for it is hard to distinguish joke from earnest in your conversation. Sing us rather a song to the lute, dear Gertrude, which will be a more pleasant seasoning to our meal than this inconsiderate talk.”

In the meantime the servant brought in and handed round broiled fish.

“That would be ill-timed for me, your worthy Grace,” replied the lady. “You learned gentlemen have a saying that ‘study and a full stomach do not agree.’ It is still more difficult to sing after a full meal.”

The Bishop quietly acquiesced in this refusal, and the company at table entered upon the fifth course; for before the arrival of the Count and his Steward, three courses had already vanished from the array of visible objects.

The Count looked on in silent wonder at the appetite of the monks, which threw even his Steward, in the shade, although the latter passed for the most famous feeder in the earldom. Still greater was his astonishment at their capacity for drinking. He himself would have altogether lost his consciousness, had he taken only half as much of the noble wine. But over them the fire of the vine-juice appeared to have no power, although their conversation became more and more animated.

At length the Count turned to the Bishop and

said: "Would your gracious Lordship permit us to seek repose for the night? Our limbs are weary from the long ride; and the morning light will summon us to new exertion."

The Bishop nodded a polite assent, and made a sign to a servant to light a candle and conduct the gentlemen to their beds.

After they had bidden the company good-night and disappeared by the door, the gentlemen eyed each other with derisive laughter, and the Abbot broke out: "A good soul, this Count! Just like a child, he believes in the fable about sin. It is not to be wondered at, that the common people allow a hell to be made hot for them by priests and monks; for the ignorant masses are without sense or judgment. But how can a man of such culture as Count Erbach still lie so helplessly bound in superstition as to make such a sacrifice for a mere illusion? not perceiving that what the Church calls sin is nothing more than an infirmity for which man can do nothing, and that he need, therefore, concern himself no further about it."

The Bishop rocked his head thoughtfully and sipped from his goblet with an expression which showed that he was ill at ease. He seemed desirous to make some reply, but did not accomplish it.

In the pause which followed, Gertrude threw out with a pungent tone the observation: "Do you speak

that of your own suggestion, my lord Abbot: or have others imparted to you this wisdom? For I could not ascribe such enlightened thoughts to your own acuteness."

The Abbot again pressed his eyes together, and making a polite bow to the lady, replied: "Humbly do I acknowledge that you are my instructress, and that the pupil will never equal your lofty flight in thinking. For I have not yet risen so high in intelligence that I, like you, blaspheme, with shameful words, the Pope and the whole Church, dethrone Almighty God himself with his angels and saints, in order to people heaven again with the old heathen deities. I have not yet gone so far that I, like you, call heaven in doubt altogether and even seek it here on earth. I am not, indeed, so well-read as you in the writings of the Humanists, who would ridicule Christianity entirely out of the world, in order that the old godless heathenism with all its scandals and vice may return."

The Canon who sat next the lady, awkwardly seized her soft, beautiful hand and said, staring at the beauty with look half averted: "You excite in me astonishment and great wonder; for your intellect soars aloft in daring flight, and although you say cutting truths against the Church, you are nevertheless right, and no one can invalidate them."

The other Canon now made a sign of dissatis-

faction. "Be silent: you do not know what you are saying. There are now but few left of the church princes and members of the higher clergy who still continue in the ancient faith, since the revival of classical learning has illuminated the world with its intelligence. Even in Rome there is the smallest possible measure of faith. It is an open secret that the Pope is more like a heathen than a Christian; and he has let fall the expression: 'The fable concerning Christ has brought us a large revenue.' Yet it is shortsighted to gossip about such things so that the people may hear of it. They must be held under the strictest custody; for otherwise we have reason to fear that the whole proud edifice of the Romish hierarchy may some night fall in ruins. Already, indeed, the troublesome Humanists are taking the most zealous pains to open the eyes of the people to the yoke which the Pope has, for centuries, put upon their neck, and the bondage in which their reason has been held. What deep wounds have those hateful and good-for-nothing *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum** alone inflicted on the Church and the clergy, by awakening the ridicule of all Europe. If we join them in blowing with their horn, we shall be digging our own grave."

* "*Letters of obscure Men*," published by the Humanists, in which the intellectual and spiritual poverty of the monks and priests was scourged in the most unmerciful way.

The Abbot rose from his seat in order to depart. He stumbled, however, against the foot of the chair and fell with a crash on the floor. After he had with some pains, and amid the jeers of those present, succeeded in regaining a standing position, and satisfied himself by careful feeling of his limbs that his body was still capable of holding together, he said with thick and maudlin tone, at the same time lifting his hand with a menacing gesture: "If any one speak a word against the Holy Father, let him be accursed." Thereupon he took another vigorous draught from the goblet; in doing which, however, half of the precious nectar ran over on his cowl.

"Well done!" giggled Gertrude. "What must become of the poor Abbot Bernhardus, if the Pope's sovereignty should to-morrow be at an end? He would have to say with the discreet steward in the parable: 'I cannot dig; to beg, I am ashamed.' In that you are all right, gentlemen. Swear bravely by the Pope and his fable: for it is the Pope who feeds you and prepares for you a comfortable bed of down."

"Gertrude!" cried the Bishop, rising flushed with anger, and raising a threatening hand.

But Gertrude met without quailing the look of the Bishop's eyes: she knew who was master of the house.

The Bishop pushed away the chair from behind him, and made a motion to his guests which signi-

fied the termination of the banquet; and with a short and cool "good-night," withdrew by a side door.

The guests left behind eyed one another with embarrassment, as if asking: "What ails the Bishop?" The Abbot measured the lady with a piercing look: "This is your work, Gertrude! For quite a long time I have observed in his Lordship a state of irritation; and it was your loose speech that aroused his displeasure."

With a laugh of triumph and a disdainful look at the Abbot, Gertrude without reply glided past the gentlemen; and these also immediately left the episcopal palace.

CHAPTER III.

WITH THE VENDER OF INDULGENCES.

“SEE there, in the horizon, the blue turrets,” cried the Steward, breaking the silence at evening of the fifth day. “That must be Halle!”

Count Eberhard of Erbach raised himself wearily in the saddle and looked with strained vision in the direction. “I shall be heartily glad, my dear Faeustlin, if you are right; for it is all I can do to keep my tired limbs erect.”

When half an hour later the knights rode through the dusky city gate, they found that it was not Halle but Merseburg. They were soon comforted, however, by learning from a passing tipstave that Halle was only about seven miles to the north.

They dismounted for entertainment at the Knight George Inn, and found in the reception room a number of strangers who were enjoying the Merseburg beer. At the table which the Count and his Steward had taken, they were soon joined by a man

who was easily recognized by his dress as a traveling merchant. The usual questions were exchanged: "Where from?" "Where to?" and the conversation soon turned on Tetzels, of whom the Count spoke as holding his market in Halle.

"There you are in error," said the trader. "This morning I saw the Papal banner of the Dominican still floating in the market place of Schkeuditz. Yet you may not have to wait long for him; as I heard that he afterward set out at noon for Halle. Very likely you may find him there to-morrow. Do you know anything more particular about him, my Lord?"

The Count shook his head. "I only know his name, and that he travels under the commission of Archbishop Albrecht."

The trader laughed heartily and added: "The stories that are told of him are very entertaining. He must have been a jolly Christian formerly. At Innsbruck he was found guilty of adultery; and the sack was quickly prepared in which, by command of the Emperor Maximilian, he was to be thrown into the river. Just in time, the Elector of Saxony interposed in his behalf as his subject; and, as a mitigation of his sentence, he was condemned to perpetual imprisonment in the Dominican Convent at Leipzig. He is probably a very useful man, however; for the Archbishop Albrecht has pledged his word for him, and

accordingly the Pope has released him from confinement and even raised him to the office of Apostolical Inquisitor. He has now for a considerable time been marching through the land collecting money for the Archbishop, of which the latter is very much in need; for the Fuggers* in Augsburg are pressing him for the 30,000 gold florins which they lent him to buy the archiepiscopal pallium from the Pope. In truth, the Archbishop could hardly find a more capable man for this purpose; for his words are like a net which everywhere makes a good haul. In spite of all his cunning, however, he fared right badly not long ago at Leipzig. A certain nobleman—we may call him Dietrich von Haaken—came to him and asked whether he could obtain indulgence for a sin which he intended to commit? In that case he would be willing to give ten dollars. Tetzl at first hesitated; under the pretext that such might be a grave case. If, however, he would lay down thirty dollars, the desired indulgence might be granted. When Tetzl had pocketed the thirty silver dollars, he thought he had taken a big fish; but he had only caught a crab. For the next day, when he was journeying away from Leipzig, the nobleman lay in wait for him, fell upon him, took away from him his well-filled money-box, and tanned his hide for him with a stick until he was a pitiable object to see. As Tetzl raised a hideous

* An ancient and well-known firm of bankers and money lenders.

cry of murder, the nobleman took out the letter of indulgence and said, laughing, that this was the sin which he had intended to commit. There was nothing for the friar to do but to keep quiet and see a fine sum of money go one way and himself another."

As the Steward perceived that such stories were unwelcome to the Count, he gave the stranger a sign, which the latter understood, that he should turn the conversation upon another subject. Many of those present had from curiosity gathered around the table; and it appeared that they likewise were on the way to Halle on the business of indulgences.

The Count and his Steward soon retired to rest, in order to set forth in the morning at the earliest possible moment.

Clear and bright rose the sun on the next morning, and the Creator's works were bathed in the richest effulgence of its light. The two travellers found themselves in a devotional frame; and the Count's heart beat with fervent longings for the heavenly letter of grace. They soon overtook on the road a mass of people, who in festive apparel were journeying toward the city; also a small band of militia. Some of them had evidently come from a distance; for their garments were very dusty and their shoes soiled. It was like a caravan of pilgrims, and devout pilgrim-songs rang solemnly in the beautiful clear morning air.

Before the Gallows' Gate of the city of Halle, a gay and motley picture presented itself. One might suppose he had happened upon the annual fair. The public square was encircled with stakes, around which green garlands were wreathed and from which floated red banners. In this gay circle had been erected two rows of booths for traffic, in which all kinds of wares were offered for sale. Among them the wheel of fortune was turned, dice were thrown, and every kind of game played. A rope-dancer was performing his daring feats; and from a large tent was heard the roar of wild beasts intermingled with the shrill tones of a band of music. There were also for the boys climbing poles and targets for archery; whilst a little to one side, the grown people were bowling for a pig and the productions of the bakery. That the love of dancing might have its gratification, two spacious tents had been erected, in which the young people tripped the mazy dance to the tones of a fiddle, and sutlers took care that a cooling drink was not wanting to the overheated dancers.

The Steward lost sight of the Count for the moment in the crowd. "What does all this mean?" he inquired of a *Hallore** who was, in great composure, surveying this whirl of gaiety.

* The laborers who work the salt-springs of Halle are called *Halloren*. They are a distinct race, descendants of the ancient Wends: and preserve the physiognomy, customs, and even costume of their ancestors.

The person accosted replied: "Are you a stranger, that you do not know who is expected in the city to-day? The famous Dominican prior and Papal Inquisitor, John Tetzel, will shortly make his entrance."

The Steward shook his head inquiringly: "But what is the use of all this nonsense? and what has this to do with Tetzel?"

"Do you call that nonsense, sir?" replied the Hallore, giving a knowing wink of the eye, and stroking his hand over the dense row of silver buttons, on his blue silk jacket. "Oh, the monk understands admirably how to wheedle the people. He knows the heart of the masses, how to speculate upon their weaknesses, and to find his gain in their passions. He fitted up a great part of these amusements at his own expense. The rest follow after him, as the sparrows do the miller's ass which carries a bursted sack. So throng the people in multitudes to his coffer. Truly, the Archbishop could not have found a better man."

At this moment the Steward observed the tall form of his master in the crowd; he therefore hastily took leave of the Hallore, and pressed after his lost companion.

Meanwhile all the bells of the city began to ring, and from all lips the cry arose: "He is coming!" "He is coming!"

Immediately the city guards appeared at the Gallows' Gate and stationed themselves with their hal-

berts, for the purpose of maintaining order. Entire schools marched out in procession, with banners and garlands; as also the monks and the nuns from all the cloisters, with tapers in their hands, to receive the man of God with honor. Last came the members of the city Council, in their velvet mantles and barettas, who entered in solemn conclave the open square before the gate. In short, the Lord Himself could hardly have been received in a more splendid and impressive manner; and it only wanted that the multitude should sing, as once in Jerusalem: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

In the distance, above the highway, rose a cloud of dust; and soon a carriage appeared, to which all eyes were at once directed with eager curiosity. When it had rolled near, there arose a rotund, thickset monk's figure with the broad, obese, olive face which was at that time the type of the fraternity, enveloped in a costly silver spangled chasuble. It was John Tetzel. His broad, sensuous mouth relaxed to a feeble smile; his naturally small eyes were now completely buried amid the projecting folds of his fat and puffy cheeks; and his short fleshy fingers were raised in blessing over the multitude, who with arms crossed on the breast sank upon their knees.

Before him was carried a large red cross with the

Papal arms, as well as a cushion of violet colored velvet with gold tassels, on which lay the Papal Bull of Indulgences. The monk, supported by his assistant Baumhauer, marched between the ranks of the people up to the Council of the city, who bade him welcome in the most reverential and dutiful manner. Thereupon the procession put itself in motion toward the chapel of St. Martin, chanting psalms on the way. When the church was reached, the Papal Bull was laid upon the altar, the red cross was planted, and the treasury-box, called "the mine of heaven," was placed beneath it.

After the people, of whom a part filled the church and a part densely crowded the open space in front of it, had become in a measure composed, Tetzels took his stand in the open door, and, after many times crossing himself, began his discourse.

"Ye dear Christian people, one and all. This is the day which the Lord has made for you. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Salvation has come to this city of Halle, as erewhiles to the house of Zacchaeus the publican; since the Lord has entered into the same. This cross with the Papal coat of arms, from which at times—as only lately at Leipzig—warm red blood flows down, has the very same power as the cross of Christ on Golgotha; and to you, who are counted worthy to behold the same, is vouchsafed a special grace, such as has been

granted to no man on earth since the day of Christ and His apostles. This day stands open to you the gate of heaven; and he who is speaking to you has in his hand the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Great is St. Peter's renown, greater than that of all the other apostles. But John Tetzel would not exchange with him; since by means of indulgences he saves more souls than St. Peter did by his preaching. Only the other day at Leipzig, five thousand people were released through indulgences; of whom only three incurred perdition for the sole reason that they like Ananias and Sapphira of old, abstracted somewhat from the indulgence money. Be it known to you, Christians beloved, one and all, that until the last day, Christ has put the whole government of His Church out of His hands and entrusted it to His Vicar on earth. Accordingly He now administers everything through this His representative, who is more powerful than all the apostles, angels, and saints, and can give remission to whom he will. This, however, washes every one whom it releases more clean than the water of baptism, so that such an one is holier than Adam in Paradise, even though he may have been the greatest and vilest of sinners—worse, for example, than the thief upon the cross, King Herod, or the fratricide Cain. Gifts of God, therefore, so high and holy, deserve the profoundest honor and reverence. So

great, indeed, is the power of the indulgence, that it not only releases him who brings it, but also others for whom it is required. For it avails not alone for the life on earth, but its influence reaches also to Purgatory and delivers from that fearful torment.

“‘Soon as gold in the coffer rings
A soul from pain to heaven springs.’

“Therefore, beloved Christians, one and all: happy are ye, if ye come forward, and receive from my hands the gifts of heaven. Woe to those who despise, or it may be defame, so holy a thing. For as the grace in my hand is great, so terribly would my vengeance fall upon those who, in this their day, will not concern themselves about the salvation of their souls. For they ought to know that, as Apostolical Inquisitor, I have the power to judge and send to hell all opposers of the Holy Father. Make haste, therefore, and save your souls. Otherwise it is possible you may never have an opportunity, for so small a price, to obtain forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. Indeed, there is no reason to hope, that, so long as the world stands, such loving charity of the Pope will reach this place. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. But in like manner think also of those who from the circle of your relations have gone before you to the other world.

Do you not hear your parents and kindred call and cry: 'Ah! will you not have compassion on us! for the hand of the Lord lies heavy upon us.' 'Must we linger out the bitterest torments, when it is in your power to release us by a trifling alms?' Are you willing to be so hard-hearted, and to have no pity for those who, in their life-time, did you much good? Surely, if you do not show pity for them, God also will not have compassion on you in the hour of death. Once more, in conclusion, therefore, I appeal to the consciences of you all: Seek the Lord, while He may be found; receive the grace which is offered to you; in order that you may escape the wrath of God. Amen."

A deep and breathless silence had brooded over the multitude during the delivery of these words, which was done with great vehemence. As soon now as Tetzel betook himself to the chest before the altar, there was a dense throng of those seeking indulgences, and who with burning tapers in their hands knelt at the altar and made their confession to Tetzel. Whereupon each, after having laid on a table set for the purpose, the money demanded, received from the hand of Father Baumhauer a Letter of Indulgence, beautifully printed on parchment, with the Papal seal affixed. In it, surrounded by lavish pictorial ornamentation, might be read a declaration of full absolution of sins, in this form:

“In the name of Jesus Christ and by His authority, and also that of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and of the most holy Father, the Pope, I absolve thee, first, from all ecclesiastical censures and penalties which thou mayest ever have merited; and further, from all sins and crimes which thou hast ever committed, of whatever kind and however great and enormous they may have been; and I remit, with full indulgence, all the punishments thou wouldst have had to endure in Purgatory. I reinstate thee in the enjoyment of the holy Sacrament of the Church and in the communion of the saints, as also in the state of innocence and purity in which thou wast by thy baptism; so that, in case of thy death, the gates of the place of torment shall be shut against thee, and the door of the Paradise of joy shall be opened unto thee.

“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

“BROTHER JOHN TETZEL

“Signed this with his own hand.”

Throughout the entire day the throng did not diminish, and when Tetzel, late in the evening, from great weariness, closed the business, hundreds were standing with empty hands and vehemently importuning the gift—which the monk with kind and assuring words promised for the next day.

In the inn at the sign of the Golden Ring, towards evening, sat the Count and his Steward by a dish of roast mutton which they thoroughly enjoyed. The gloomy cloud had disappeared from the Count's brow, and he maintained a cheerful conversation with Sir

Neidhardt Faeustlin, who also rejoiced in the buoyant tone of his lord. Many things in Tetzels, it is true, had not been satisfactory to the Count, especially his exceedingly boastful and ostentatious manner of speaking. He was also troubled at the demeanor of the people, who, for the most part, took the matter of their confession very little to heart, and bought the Letter of Indulgence as they would a pound of meat from the butcher. But he had really performed a sincere and honest penance, and now, with the Church's pledge and assurance of absolution in his hands, his heart light, and his conscience in peace, he could again find enjoyment in life.

CHAPTER IV.

AT HOME.

FROM the balcony of the ancient castle of Fuers-tenau, the ancestral residence of the family of Erbach, two female forms were looking downward upon the wildly romantic and fragrant valley. They must undoubtedly have been mother and daughter; for the similarity of features and of form was striking.

In the older of the two we have before us the Countess Maria von Erbach, of the lineage of the Counts of Werthheim. She was a tall, charming, and estimable lady, a little past forty. Her thick, wavy, and shining hair encircled a face from which beamed a sweet and gentle disposition, and a clear intelligence which imparted to her something queenly and imposing.

The other was Margaretta, the eldest daughter of the Countess. In her, the mother's beauty was reproduced in still greater attractiveness. She was just at the age when the bud is opening and the flower

about to expand in the full perfection of tint and fragrance. Her figure was slender, graceful, and fairy-like; the eyes were violet-blue and expressive, under overhanging silken brows; the cheeks wore a soft blush of red upon a well-nigh transparent lily-white complexion; a winsome, sunshiny smile played upon her delicate purple lips, while her golden hair fell in long, smoothly braided tresses. It was a picture of almost more than earthly beauty. That a young artist, who the previous year had come to the castle in order to paint the young lady's portrait, had retired with a secret wound of the heart, subsequently pining away in secret melancholy, because he could neither forget the lovely creature nor make her his own, was to no one a surprising occurrence. Nor did it cause astonishment, that almost simultaneously Margaretta's hand was sought by eight different suitors, though she was still as it were but a child. The one by whom the prize was won, young Count Philip von Rieneck, was congratulated by all on his good fortune. These felicitations were abundantly justified: for in Margaretta he had found a jewel for which he had every reason to thank God on his bended knees. Far and wide extended the fame of her kindness of heart and generosity. All of her father's dependents knew her, especially the poor, needy, and suffering; to whom she seemed an angel when she entered their humble dwellings, helping and comforting, drying up

their tears and healing their wounds. Like a sun, she was the light also of her parents' home, the darling of all the inmates of the castle.

Mother and daughter were standing thus upon the balcony of the castle, and letting their eyes wander far away over the rustling tops of the dark pine trees, along the road as it wound up and down among the rocks and bushes.

"What in the world can have happened that father so long delays his return home?" said Margaretta in a subdued voice. "I hope nothing evil has happened to him on the way."

"You pierce my heart with your anxiety, my darling child," replied the mother. "According to my reckoning, your father should have been home the day before yesterday. Yet let us not be desponding as well as anxious. He is in the hand of God, and at this very time engaged in a course in which divine guidance and favor must surely attend him."

At this moment the watchman's horn resounded from the tower, and the signal betokened a welcome visit. From near by rang also the voices of Barbara and Anna, Margaretta's younger sisters, who from the battlements were waving handkerchiefs in the direction of the mountain.

Startled with joy the Countess and Margaretta turned about. "Father!" they cried, and hastened

down the stairway of the tower, in order to welcome the long-desired one in the Hall.

They had not yet reached the bottom of the winding steps, when from the hall a youthful voice was recognized. "It is Philip," cried Margareta, blushing with joy, and hurrying past her mother, she threw herself in a transport of delight into the arms of her betrothed, as the mother reached the hall. Meanwhile Anna and Barbara also rushed in, and overwhelmed Philip with caresses, so that for some time the mother, not able to reach him, looked on smiling at the efforts of the favorite guest to disengage himself from the children's embraces.

"You bring joy to our house, as usual," said the mother in her soft musical voice. "So a hearty welcome from us all. But for what reason do you so seldom gladden us with your visits, dearest Philip? It is now almost two months that we have not seen your face. I have had as much as I could do to answer the tormenting questions of your betrothed, and to appease her anxiety about you."

The young Count kissed the Countess mother's hand caressingly, and thereupon drew his betrothed to his side. "I have been very much needed by my father, ever since I returned from Wittenberg," he said; "to whom one of his officials is giving sore trouble. Even to-day I can stay only a short time with you."

Margaretta stroked lovingly his wavy hair, "I have you again, my Philip," she said, "and so all is right. I am thankful if you gave us only an hour. At any rate I know that my anxiety was foolish, that you are safe and sound, and that you love me."

Meanwhile the servants had brought in the silver cups, for it was the time of the morning draught.

"But where is our George?" inquired Philip, when he saw that the place of the eldest son was vacant.

"Gone to meet his father," answered Margaretta.

"And where is his father?"

"For two days we have been expecting him back from Halle."

"From Halle?"

"Ah, you know nothing at all about his movements, because you have been so long away from Fuerstenau. He has ridden with Lord Faeustlin to the Commissioner of Indulgences."

Philip raised his eyes in astonishment.

"He has been decidedly melancholy and dejected of late," interposed the Countess Maria. "It seemed as if he could have no more enjoyment, and all our love did not avail to brighten his countenance. At last he came to me one morning and said: 'Maria, I must have a letter of Indulgence; I must see the assurance of God's grace in black and white, in order that I may have peace of soul. It would not do,

either, to have the certificate of absolution fall into my hand without any trouble; but I must patiently acquire it for myself by a long pilgrimage and severe fasting. Therefore will I seek the distant venter whose name is known and famous far and wide.' He forthwith mounted his horse and rode away with our Steward. I wish he were safe back again."

Philip sat long in silence, as if lost in thought, with his head bent and his chin resting on his hand, so that the ladies were struck by it. He also lost the thread of conversation and spoke like one absorbed and absent.

"What is the matter with you, Philip?" asked Margaretta.

"Nothing at all," replied the Count, passing his hand over his brow. "A thought often strikes a man, which carries him away so that he forgets for the moment what is about him. Excuse me, dear friends."

He took part again in the conversation, and was soon once more the animated, playful, and entertaining Philip, who, as if with magnetic power, attracted all hearts to him. With heartfelt pride and maternal joy, did the gaze of the Countess Maria rest upon her future son-in-law, who now with his betrothed upon his arm went down into the castle garden to gather strawberries.

Margaretta had truly fallen upon a happy choice.

Among all her suitors, her unerring instinct had discovered the fairest and noblest. Count Philip sprang from a very ancient family in Franconia which already in the twelfth century held a place of distinction among the German nobility. This ancient family, however, at present was represented by only two persons. Young Philip, the only son of a widowed father, was the last of his lineage; and it seemed as if the entire strength and glory of the race was once more concentrated in him, and as if in him rested the hope of a new budding and expansion. Philip was a *beau ideal* of the splendid and knightly; tall and slender in person, noble and well proportioned in body, and a countenance which had an almost magical influence on every beholder. The glow of health and youth mantled his cheeks; his smile uncovered pure white teeth between his jet black moustache and beard; above which towered a majestically arched brow; and dark brown eyes beamed with intelligence above a finely curved aquiline nose. Even the livid scar which ran across his brow was no disfiguration to him, but served rather as an embellishment, to complete the heroic aspect of his manly face. Especially when mounted on his steed in steel armor, with the plume of sky-blue feathers and purple sash, one could not imagine a more handsome and lordly knight; and if he appeared in the tournament or field of battle, it would seem as if he

could not possibly be vanquished, and that victory were allied by magic to his sword. But even when he appeared, as to-day, not as a warrior but as a cavalier, in an outer garment of steel-blue, with wide slashed sleeves, open at the breast and showing an under dress of violet with silver embroidery; a broad, snowy-white, ruffled collar; a black-velvet baretta with a waving plume of white ostrich feathers upon his curly head; and still more unconstrained gracefulness in his movements; he extorted admiration, even from the bitterest enemy, as a handsome and splendid nobleman.

Countess Maria making the sign of the cross behind the betrothed pair, and devoutly raising her eyes to heaven, whispered: "God bless, preserve, and keep you."

Thereupon she turned and went into the kitchen to the servants, in order to make some new arrangements for the dinner: since for the favorite guest some additional and special preparation must be made. She was met in the door by Daniel, an old man of seventy-six years, who had served Count von Erbach from the days of his childhood. He was a model of integrity and fidelity, despite a very homely face deeply furrowed with marks of the small-pox and a still more harsh and disagreeable voice which sounded like the winding-up of an old fashioned weight-clock.

“What have you there, Daniel?” inquired the Countess, surprised.

Without changing a feature the old man replied: “What is suitable,” and thereupon laid on the table a well grown turkey.

Faithful Daniel! When he saw Count Philip ride over the drawbridge, the first thing he did was to wave his hat in salutation, and the next was to creep into the poultry pen for a roast.

“You good soul,” said the Countess, patting his wrinkled cheeks. “Where you are taking care, another may spare himself the trouble.”

The old man smiled gently. “I should be the veriest ice clod in the world, if this sun did not thaw me. See, my gracious lady, when it became known that our dear young mistress had given Count Philip her consent, old Daniel folded his hands and said: ‘To-day is salvation come to this house.’” He then made a gesture with his hand to the Countess, as if to say, “You can go, I will see to everything.”

The Countess understood the silent hint of the old man and followed her children into the Castle garden.

CHAPTER V.

DISTURBED PEACE.

TOWARD evening of the same day, the watchman's horn again sounded from the tower a blast of good omen; and Count Erbach and his Steward, attended by George, sprang into the Castle court.

The greeting was as jubilant, and the joy of meeting again as fervent, as if the Count were returning from a bloody fray, and with difficulty could he ward off the questions with which he was besieged until he had finally seated himself in the large hall at the long, oaken family table, and the minds of all had gradually become tranquil by the sight of him returned home in safety. It now appeared, from the particular narrative which the Count gave of his journey, that his return was delayed by a visit which he made to his old friend, a companion in arms, at the Castle of Goseck, on the Saale.

Countess Maria, thankful and happy, kept her eyes riveted on the countenance of her husband, from which

the gloomy clouds had vanished, and listened eagerly with the rest to the entertaining narratives.

Philip, however, after the first hearty greeting, again sat still at the table, as if lost in thought, and only occasionally put in a word. At first, this did not attract the notice of the Count. But when the meal was finished, and the Countess had retired with the children to the family room, and the two gentlemen sat alone in a corner room of the tower, by a mug of beer, the Count soon asked: "What ails you, my dear Philip? Your eye is not so bright and cheerful as usual, and your lips are very sparing of words."

Philip made a deprecating gesture, as if the question were unwelcome to him, and sought to turn the conversation on another subject. Yet as the Count still pressed his inquiries, Philip, with his eye steadily and earnestly fixed upon him, said deliberately: "Excuse me, very dear Count, if I should give you pain; for such is not my intention. I love you as I do my own father. But your joy, Sir Count, is my sadness: for it rests on an illusion."

The Count fastened upon the young man a searching look. "What is the meaning of your expression? Do you really think that the peace which now fills my soul, is a mere deception, a vain delusion?"

Philip slowly nodded assent. "Much disorder and

mischief is occasioned by this business of indulgences; and the assumptions of the venders go much beyond the meaning and the authority of God's word."

"What do you mean by that?" asked the Count with visible astonishment.

Philip sighed, and after a pause continued: "Everywhere it is plain that these monks no longer make any distinction between the temporal penalties which the Church imposes and the everlasting punishment which Almighty God denounces against sin. These eternal retributions can no man remit, not even the Pope, although his power and authority is otherwise so great. In a word, the Pope can forgive no sin, this is the prerogative of God alone; he can only remit what he himself imposes. I therefore call that presumption and blasphemy which is preached by the venders of indulgences, among whom Tetzel is the most audacious and shameless."

The Count had listened to these words with growing uneasiness, and reddening with displeasure now broke out: "My son, who are you, that you should indulge in such lawless expressions? If you were not my future son-in-law, and a young man without experience and discretion, I should take serious notice of such temerity in you."

Over Philip's handsome face there passed a still deeper shadow of sadness, and the heaving breast betrayed his inward emotion. "If you call my words

presumption and folly, dearest father, then you must accuse many venerable universities and reverend divines of the same. It is not I who have originated these views; but every now and then has the mouth of enlightened men protested against this papal abuse, which only for base and venal purposes has been allowed to come into general practice. Evil enough, it is true, has the papal displeasure vented itself against the free expression of the truth, so that now-a-days only in a corner and in concealment is honor given to truth. The smoke ascending from the stake of Savonarola and Huss has stricken terror into the hearts of men; and the clanking chains of John von Wesel cry: 'Be silent! be dumb! unless your bones are to moulder in prison.' In short, what is to be said when the Pope is called the vicegerent of God on earth? The history of the bishops of Rome is a tale of error, guilt, and horror. Ought he who now occupies the chair of Peter to be called a bishop? Can he be a Christian at all? Has not Rome, the holy city, come to be a Sodom and Gomorrah? Pilgrims who have visited it in good faith have no words to describe the sink of ungodliness and moral pollution in which priest and people there wallow. Sacred things are scoffed at in the most unblushing manner. A mass priest, for example, has had the effrontery at the altar and in the celebration, instead of the words of consecration, to say: *Panis es, et*

panis manebis.* If in the holy city, under the eyes of the Pope, such blasphemous mockery can take place, can we wonder that every where holy things are trodden under foot? At Strasburg, not long ago, a company of youngsters carried to the altar a keg of wine and there held their carousal, mingling their cups with the singing of lewd songs. Again, during high mass, some noblemen appeared in the Cathedral with hunting dogs, and from time to time let fly a falcon for the diversion of the worshippers. Also a man, to shorten his road, dragged a pig through the house of God which by its cries obliged the officiating priest to pause in reading the mass. Wherever one turns his eye, there is such visible disorder and ruin as plainly show the Church to be paralyzed, and to have no longer the inward vitality to protect itself against this desecration, which indeed it first called forth. It is the curse of her defection from the truth, of her silencing the word of God. Ah, who has tears enough in his head sufficiently to bewail all the wretchedness into which the sin of the Popes has plunged the Church of Christ? When, oh when, shall the day of the Lord come in which the truth shall triumph over falsehood?"

During this speech the Count had risen from his seat. He saw not the fire of holy zeal in the eye of Philip, he did not mark the deep movement of his

* Bread thou art, and bread thou wilt remain.

soul; he was only beside himself at the words which fell like hammer blows in his heart, and which sounded to him like the voice of a blasphemer or a madman. "What has got into you, Philip?" he cried with his eye-brows raised in astonishment. "How has such a change come over you, as it were in a night? Who has imbued you with such heretical notions? For they could not surely have sprung from your own head; much as you are inclined, in the zeal of keen investigation, to search things to the bottom. Has perchance the ill-starred Ulrich von Hutten again come in your way? Very much against my wish I have observed that you had formed an association with him; for the blood flows tumultuously in his veins, and his radical brain teems with mischievous thoughts. In his wild turbulence he could subvert all order and throw the work of God into confusion. More sharp and piercing than his sword is his pen, which he dips in poison and gall; and with the biting acid of his ridicule he is not ashamed to asperse even the holiest object. Who was it that cast abroad in the world the *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum*? To be sure, the writer cowardly withheld his name; but Hutten's pen could be recognized at the first glance, at least he had a hand in the matter and zealously helped it forward. Besides, why does the man take upon him to write against the Pope in Rome, and all the bishops, and the

Church in general? Truly the holy Father's mildness is great, that he does not kindle for this heretic the well deserved stake. Tell me, therefore, candidly, Philip, whether it was Hutten that put these unholy thoughts into your mind?"

Philip had more than once attempted, but without success, to reply to the Count, who appeared not at all to have heard what the former had said about the corruption of the Church. He now shook his head gravely, saying: "Your suspicion, Sir Count, is entirely erroneous. I have, indeed, occasionally exchanged views with Hutten, but have never been his admirer or follower; for his tone of thought and innermost conviction are widely different from mine. It is true, he longs, as I do, for freedom; but his conception of freedom is not according to my judgment. His delight is to destroy, but not to build. He aims to amend the scandals of the times by ridicule; but will not take pains to heal with a loving hand the wounds. He wants to make the world better, but not himself, though for the latter he has every reason. Such an attempt is vain, and such a man is not after my heart."

The frown upon the Count's brow had relaxed at the words, and in a more kindly tone he said, "That is a wise speech, my son; and I could wish that hereafter you would keep entirely out of the way of Hutten. For there is something fascinating in the man,

and his poetical genius enables him to clothe his diabolical thoughts in the garb of an angel of light, in order that he may insinuate poison into the minds of the young and unsuspecting. But if this Hutten was not the instigator of your unbelief; pray tell me then from whom you imbibed it? Can it be the fruit of your studies at Wittenberg?"

Philip's countenance brightened with animation. "I bless the day when I decided to go to Wittenberg. It is true, that I forsook the dry and tedious professor of law, Henning Goede, as soon as I had found my way to the lecture room of Dr. Martin Luther. I also took leave of the Humanists, and so did the great mass of the students; for no one can compete with Luther, who has no equal in the whole institution. All throng to his feet; and I, too, have become his constant pupil, have not missed one of his lectures, and think of nothing any more but Theology."

"Who is this Luther you speak of?" asked the Count, with cool civility. "I do not know whether a man of that name even exists in the world."

Philip's eyes kindled with still greater brilliancy. "Dr. Martin Luther," said he, "is a professor—ah, what am I saying?—he is a Prophet! His words are like flames of fire, which kindle every heart."

"That has been the way of all heretics," said Count Erbach with bitterness; "and a heretic he

seems to be, according to all that he has infused into you."

"You call him so," proceeded Philip with warmth, "because you do not know him. Had you seen and heard him, you would have fallen at his feet and said: 'Thou art a man of God, and as an angel sent from heaven.'"

The Count raised in a deprecating way both his arms and crossed himself. "Now be silent; for you torture me with your talk. I returned home in peace of mind—do you think it was a delusive peace? When the convalescent feels a new vital force in his veins, will he allow himself to be persuaded that he is still sick, and that his recovery was a mere illusion?"

Philip was silent. It gave him deep concern to have caused so much annoyance to the father of his betrothed; and he even desired to express his regret that he had fallen upon this conversation at all, when the officiating priest of Michelstadt, a small town in the neighborhood, was announced. He had been informed of the Count's return, and wished to satisfy himself of the benefit derived by his penitent from the pilgrimage.

The Count met him excitedly and, scarcely allowing him time for salutation, addressed him: "You are welcome at all times to my house, my very dear Speckel, but doubly so at present. Here is a young

man whose soul is in imminent peril of losing itself in the dreary waste of unbelief. Tell me, are you familiar with the name of Martin Luther?"

"Martin Luther," repeated the priest, meditating. "I seem to have heard of him, and nothing favorable. He must be a learned man, and have a smooth and glib tongue, with which he bears down everything. But he has wonderful notions in his head; and if not already a heretic, will soon be one, in case he continues to pervert the Scriptures as he has done for some years past."

The Count eagerly grasped the hand of his confessor: "God bless you for this word. You have come hither at an opportune moment, as if sent by God. Philip, do you hear this? You have fallen into the hands of a heretic. Therefore take warning, and forget what he has whispered in your ear. Consider it the devil himself who has crept to your side and sought to corrupt your soul. Although he seem to you like an angel, reflect, that Satan often assumes the appearance of an angel of light, to beguile the weak, and also the young who have had no earnest experience of life and lend a willing ear to every novelty. May God, however, have compassion on His Church and destroy the instrument of Satan."

Philip extended his hand to the Count and said gently: "Let us beseech God to give us enlight-

ened eyes to discern what is the truth, and what is error."

"Yes, God grant it," replied the Count, in a somewhat milder tone, and then turning to the priest said: "Excuse me, reverend sir, that I cannot longer enjoy your society at present; for my exhausted body craves the repose of the night."

The three men took a hasty leave of each other.

The next morning the Count had ridden out betimes. On a forest height, not far from Michelstadt, he was having a ruined chapel rebuilt in honor of his patron-saint, the Holy Virgin; and he wished to inspect the progress which had been made in the work during his late journey. His absence this morning was quite agreeable to Philip; as he could now without interruption communicate to the Countess and his betrothed what had occurred the evening before between himself and the father. He found both in the Kemnate, or family apartment. This was a social and pleasant room in which the whole family delighted to gather, and which the guests also enjoyed more thoroughly than the great saloon on the walls of which hung the trophies of the chase, arms, and equipments. It was here as quiet and peaceful as in a sanctuary, and a magic twilight enhanced the feeling of solemnity. Six large oil paintings in dark wood frames were suspended on the

brown wainscoted walls, from which looked down the pictures of saints; and a crucifix, carved in ivory, spread its arms in blessing over a small prayer-altar, decked with two wax candles and bouquets of fresh flowers. In each of the two deep, ivy-clad bay windows stood a distaff of black ebony, artistically inlaid with mother-of-pearl. An oblong table of oak stood in the midst of the room, around which were placed fine wooden chairs with high perforated backs; and near to the porcelain stove, on the green tiles of which was represented the history of St. Elizabeth, was a comfortable double-seat upholstered with purple red velvet inviting to rest. From a ceiling panelled like the walls, a lamp was suspended by a silver rod; and the floor of encaustic tiles was spread with costly lynx skins over which the inmates passed with noiseless step.

Many an hour rich in social enjoyment had Philip already passed in this hallowed apartment. To-day also he hoped for a tranquillizing influence on his greatly excited mind, in this temple of peace. He had not closed his eyes during the whole night; and his countenance wore an anxious and troubled look. But instead of deriving peace of mind from this quiet apartment, he brought into it his own unrest; for the two ladies heard with alarm and distress the news of his discussion with the Count, and followed with a painful suspense Philip's explanations, as he

now gave them in a connected view his religious convictions of which he had already disclosed many occasional intimations.

For a long time they found no words. The mother gazed in the distance like one bereft: Margaretta had a glistening tear in the eye. At last, with a deeply drawn sigh the Countess said: "My mind is exceedingly perplexed and undecided. What shall I say? My husband has always appeared to me worthy of reverence in his earnest piety and immovable faith. He accepts with unquestioning confidence all that the Church teaches; and in comparison with him I often seem to myself feeble and undevout, because my faith had still so manifold conflict with doubt. Again and again have I said wishfully to myself: Ah, if I could only be like him! But when I hear your words, my dear Philip, it seems to me as if the halo of sanctity about my husband's head faded, and as if nothing which the Church teaches and we hold sacred is according to the word of God. What I have often felt as a presentiment in my secret thought, you speak out to me in clear and undisguised words; and what I timidly ventured not to formulate in words, lest it might be heresy and a suggestion of Satan, you express freely and without reserve as your profound conviction. What am I to do? In whom should I put confidence?"

She rose and paced the floor, wringing her hands

in vehement distress. "What ought I to do? Alas, miserable is the heart of woman, to whom man's capacity of searching investigation and clear reasoning has been denied."

Margaretta had folded herself closely on the breast of her betrothed, and as if seeking help, her tearful eyes were lifted imploringly to his. "Philip, my trusted Philip, your speech goes through my heart like a two-edged sword; and yet—you surely can be no heretic."

Philip drew the maiden tenderly and lovingly to his breast, and stroking her heavy, shining hair, said: "Margaretta, you will yet learn to understand me, although you are at present terrified; for you love me, and therefore *you* believe in me."

Then turning to the mother, he continued: "I beg you to revolve this matter silently in your heart: I will return once more to Wittenberg, and hear still longer the man of God, in order that he may guide me out of the twilight into the clear light of day. It seems to me as if the world must yet hear of this man, for he is very wonderful: his intellect is so clear, his heart so pure, his character so great, and his courage so heroic."

"Ah, will you leave us again?" gasped Margaretta. "When I see your face and hear your voice, I am cheerful and hopeful: but when you are gone, all my courage ebbs away again."

Yet the mother nodded approvingly to Philip: "Go, in God's name, and seek to be enlightened; in order that from thy light a ray may fall even into our darkness."

CHAPTER VI.

WITTENBERG HAMMER BLOWS.

ENTERING the narrow Castle Street of Wittenberg, one might see an ancient house, many-angled, and ornamented with projecting windows. Count Philip of Rieneck was sitting in a small room of this house absorbed in a book. It was one of the last days of October. The autumn leaves which several frosty nights had loosened were falling quietly. But the sun still cast his rays warm and kindly over the half dead world, and enticed many a townsman to an excursion abroad.

Count Philip, however, was scarcely conscious to-day that the sun was shining. He sat well nigh the whole blessed day over the book which a friend had brought him, and had even omitted his dinner in the engrossing interest. His eyes were fastened intently upon the letters as if he would devour them; and often would he look up from the page, reflecting on what he had read and digesting it slowly

in his mind. Many times, also, he would fetch a deep sigh, and there would pass over his beautiful and manly face a gleam of intelligent satisfaction.

The book was an Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, by the Wittenberg Professor, Dr. Martin Luther.

Suddenly the Count sprang from his seat and paced the room with rapid strides, with his hand under his chin, and soliloquizing: "So then, we hold that man becomes righteous before God through faith in Christ, without the works of the law. Almighty God, I thank Thee for this instruction. Here is the key to the fundamental and cardinal errors of Rome. This is the central point about which is grouped the whole Papal doctrine of salvation. Every thing appears now to me in a new light. Now I know why I never attained to the true joy of existence. I have wished to build myself a bridge to heaven of my own virtue; and the timber was decayed, the bridge gave way under my feet. I now see that the bridge is let down from above, that God's grace meets me and says: Only believe, and grace lends thee aid to eternal life. There is only one deliverance for all flesh, namely, faith in Him whom God hath made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Now, for the first time, I know how to make the right use of Christ, the Redeemer, which up

to this time I did not know; for hitherto He has always stood to me like an old faded image of a saint in a corner, and I never knew what He should do to help me, inasmuch as I wished to do and merit everything myself. Now Christ becomes to me a living person, and fitted to act; now He becomes my personal Saviour, whose strength is made perfect in my weakness, and He gives me that of grace which hitherto I have striven in vain to acquire. How Luther knows to speak of Christ! It is like an entirely new language."

Philip searched among the papers on his table till he found a slip, the copy of a letter from Luther to the Augustinian monk, George Spenlein, which had reached him through a friend. "I cannot read these words often enough," he said to himself; "and the oftener I read them the more I find in them. The great man says: 'My dear brother, learn to know Christ crucified; learn, despairing of yourself, to say: Lord Jesus, Thou art my righteousness, and I am Thy sin. Thou hast taken me upon Thyself, and given me what is Thine; Thou hast assumed what Thou wast not, and given to me what I was not. Forbear to strive for such a purity that thou shalt no longer consider thyself a sinner; for Christ dwells only with sinners. Therefore came He down from heaven, where He abides with holy beings, in order to dwell with sinners. Meditate upon this

love, and you will derive from it a sweet comfort. Why should He have suffered death, if we could gain peace of conscience from our penances and good works? Therefore only when you despair of yourself and your own good works, will you find peace in Him; for He has taken your sins upon Him, and made over His righteousness to you.'"

The Count laid the letter again carefully in the portfolio, and stepped with upward lifted eyes to the window. "Ah, how is it yet with me! It has been winter with me, my past life lying stiffened in the snow and ice of delusion. Now it becomes spring; it begins to bud and sprout; now will all become new in me. Blessed be the day that I sought thy face, thou man of God, thou chosen instrument! Thee also may the Almighty bless, that thy voice may resound through the world like the trumpet of God."

Just then the bell tolled from the tower of the city church. "Luther preaches the vesper sermon," said the Count to himself, and hastily sought for his mantle and baretta.

At the same moment a loud uproar was heard below in the entry of the house. Philip recognized the harsh metallic voice of his landlord, the master turner, Tobias Trautwein, who had probably come home in a drunken state according to his habit. The Count hastened down the steep, creaking stairs, and

found the landlord there, a billet in his hand, with his face like fire and his veins swelled with rage, storming at his wife.

“What is the matter with you, Tobias, that you are in such a fury?” inquired Philip calmly.

The man turned abruptly and replied: “Has not one a right to storm and thunder when he meets with such injustice? Look here, Sir Count, does it not stand there in black and white, that all my sins are remitted; and is not that the Pope’s coat of arms below? Have I not also laid down my honest money for it—six groschen cash? Yet, now this—this—this peevish monk, this hypocritical fellow with the fiery eyes, has let fly at me, and thrown the certificate at my feet.”

“What are you saying, Tobias? I do not clearly understand you,” said the Count.

“Yes, now, to be sure,” Tobias answered, “three days ago I was with him at confession—when he said to my face: ‘Master Tobias,’ said he, ‘you are a sot; and besides, you are a savage to your wife. If you do not repent from the heart, I cannot give you absolution.’ Forthwith, then, in my vexation, I went straight to Jueterbogk, where that man Tetzel has at this time a market, and bought for myself a certificate of indulgence. That is a man for you, Sir Count. He knows how to deal with people. He asked me, ‘For what do you want an in-

dulgence?’ For drinking, I replied; and because lately in a spree I struck my good woman a blow on the head and made a bruise, so that she lost her strength entirely and kept her bed three days. ‘It will cost six groschen,’ said Tetzels, and the business was finished. So I went again to the confessional, held the certificate before his nose, and asked if he would give me absolution now. Then he became more fierce than he was the first time, snatched the paper out of my hand, threw it on the ground as if it were an object of disgust which one ought not to take in his hands, and addressed me sternly: ‘If you are resolved to go to hell, my friend, go; I cannot prevent you. But I am not willing to go with you; which I should most certainly do if I became the minister of sin to you, by giving you absolution although I knew that your profession of repentance was a lie.’ What do you think of that, Sir Count? That has never been heard since the world stood.”

“Who is the monk?” Philip asked.

“Why, who else but Luther?” blurted out master Tobias. “For some time already he has pursued his own way, and will not hear a word about Tetzels, who nevertheless sells indulgences in the name and with the commission of the Pope. This matter of indulgences is a fine thing too; and I allow no one to say anything against it to me. Broth-

er Martin, however, lets his head hang to the earth, and knows nothing but repentance—and again repentance—and all the time repentance. But, bad luck to him, such preaching of repentance must get him into trouble. I shall run away to my godfather, Zacharias Schneidewind, the sword furbisher, and to Peter Pflaume, the tanner, and to Elias Lambert, the armorer, and to others besides, who all clinch their fist against the black toad who croaks repentance—repentance; and then I shall hurry to the “Green Pine,” where the students hold their carousals. They are also in arms against this fellow Luther; because he opposes their drinking, quarrelling, and fighting, and from the pulpit denounces such practices in terrific words, and desires that they should maintain a moral and honorable deportment as Christian youth. There will be a good crowd of us, when we are all together; and then look out, my precious monk, for those who are against you are more than those who hang by your cowl. I shall run to Tetzels and accuse you to the Apostolical Inquisitor: heigho! he will stop your muzzle and smoke your cowl for you.”

Count Philip laid his hand firmly on the madman's arm. “Moderate yourself, Master Tobias! You are speaking inconsiderate words, like a drunken man. The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

The master eyed the Count askance and dubiously. "Are you also one of those whom the seducer has drawn into his net? Really you are the last one I should have suspected of such weakness; for frank and clear does your eye look abroad at the world, as of one who investigates the reason of every thing, and will not allow any blockhead to lead him by the nose."

"How do you know that Luther is a blockhead?" asked the Count, in a sharp and emphatic tone. "His mind is enlightened to discern the truth. But those who cannot bear his light wherewith he exposes their secret wickedness—they you may call blockheads and owls of the night."

Master Tobias was on the point of an outbreak. But his wife pulled him anxiously by the coat and whispered to him: "It is our Count; be quiet."

This admonition and hint at the liberal rent which the Count of Rieneck was paying, silenced in some measure the wrath of Master Tobias, so that he spoke with more composure. But he still insisted that Luther must rue it; that his enemies in Wittenberg were to go on with the matter; and that Tetzels must institute a process against him.

The Count left the house and walked abroad. He had wished to go and hear Luther's vesper sermon. For he did not willingly neglect one of these discourses, in which Luther, quite contrary to the

usual custom, was explaining in order the Lord's Prayer, and always to an overflowing church; although, in addition to other labors, he ascended the pulpit many days three, and even four, times. Yet, now, a good part of the time for the service was already elapsed; and besides, he found his mind in such a state of agitation that he could not command the calmness proper for devotion. Accordingly he wandered slowly and thoughtfully down the narrow street through the Elster gate and strolled awhile in the Speck, a small pleasure grove not far from the city gate. He would gladly have called at the "Green Pine," the inn situated there, to drink a mug of "cuckoo," the far-famed Wittenberg beer, for he felt an unusual thirst. But the disorderly uproar which reached his ear from the inn made him averse to enter it. Yet curiosity impelled him nearer to it. For it was notorious that here those students used to come together who had less to do with study than with drinking and carousing; and who, on that account, mocked at Luther in all the moods and tenses and domineered over the diligent and orderly students. Sure enough, amid the confused din of voices, the Count heard repeatedly the name of Luther, and not at all in a kindly spirit.

He returned home again, tormented with anxieties; and the whole night could find no sleep. Even the next day, he was unable to get the better

of a certain inquietude and anxiety; so that he made only a slow and unsatisfactory progress in study. A presentiment of evil to his beloved teacher lay like a stone upon his heart.

One morning his landlady, Frau Ursula Trautwein, entered his chamber in a state of excitement. "What is to be done, Sir Count? My husband has been over there in Jueterbogk with Tetzal to accuse Luther and report the people in the street. In Jueterbogk there is a great fire burning, kindled by Tetzal's hand; and the Inquisitor has proclaimed aloud: 'In such a fire must those be consumed who have opened a blasphemous mouth against the commands and tenets of the Holy Church.' Sir Count, mark my word, this bodes no good end."

The Count stood awhile lost in deep reflection. He then seized, hastily and with decision, his cap and mantle and hastened, with the utmost despatch, down the stairway. He turned his steps through the College street to the Augustinian Convent, in whose apartments Luther had his lodging.

To the threefold rap of the wooden knocker on the outer door, the porter opened, after he had satisfied himself, by a peep through the little observation window, who was outside, and admitted the Count into the court. Profound quiet reigned here; only a soft organ tone from the chapel blended with the voice of a priest singing mass. A stone stair-

way, with worn steps, led to a vaulted passage scantily supplied with light from the small lancet windows by which the wall was pierced. At the end of the long cellar-like passage was the cell which Philip sought. He knocked on the heavy oaken door, equiped with fancy bands of iron; but all was silent. "Can it be that he is not at home?" murmured Philip with concern. At a second rap, however, was heard a low "Come in"; and the Count opened the door grating on its rusty hinges. He entered a small, narrow cell. Even here the light was softened and dubious; for a single window, high placed, and glazed with round panes in lead, permitted only so much daylight to enter as made its way through the leafless tops of the lindens in the convent garden. It was a cell like all the rest, cold and frosty, poor and unfit for habitation, the fit shelter of an Augustinian mendicant monk. In the middle stood a rude oaken table with clumsy feet; in front of it an old leather-bottomed settee for three persons, with fancy carving on the high backs of the seats. Besides these there was a pine case of drawers with twisted serpent-like feet; an old, worm-eaten prayer-desk with crucifix; a copper lamp, an hour-glass, an earthen water-pitcher, and in the corner a miserable wooden bed. Such was the furniture of an Augustinian friar. Yet here no ordinary friar could be housed. The rich oil-painting

on the wall, with the monogram L. K. encircled by a crested serpent, a gift of the famous artist Lucas Kranach; the number of books and folios in hogskin binding on the table and on the floor; also a lute in the window recess; give presage of an occupant who is deeply interested in learning and art.

The monk was sitting at the table in the garb of his order, with a woollen mantle thrown over him since the stove as yet gave no warmth, absorbed in a book; and he seemed not to hear the salutation of the visitor. He must have spoken the "come in" unconsciously.

The Count had entered, and already repented having disturbed the pious man in his study. Brother Martin suddenly turned himself toward the door. Count Philip confronted a pale, emaciated face, bearing the traces of mental toil and inward conflict, over the sunken cheeks of which peered large dark eyes now larger and brighter than usual. Luther raised himself quickly from his seat and approached his visitor with a winning smile, at the same time grasping both his hands. "Ah, it is you, my worthy Count von Rieneck, who visit me already at so early an hour in the morning. You ought to be the more welcome as you so seldom allow me to have the pleasure of your company."

"The reason of that is, reverend Doctor, that I am ashamed to interrupt and trouble you," replied

the Count with a modest gesture. "It is enough that I venture to hearken to your voice at a distance; for I am not absent from one of your lectures or sermons."

A smile of pleasure passed over the lips of Luther. "That is an unusual thing, for a nobleman to dismount from his horse and put off his armor in order to listen to a monk's voice amid students. For you have come to Wittenberg, not to enter the service of the Church, but solely with a thirst for knowledge and truth. God grant that the way may be opened for the truth through the error and falsehood of the times."

The Count saw, with an expression of painful solicitude, the holy animation which beamed from the large beautiful eyes of the monk in uttering these words. "Might I announce, reverend and worthy Doctor, what has brought me to you at so early an hour?"

"Speak, without hesitation," said Luther encouragingly, and placed a chair for his guest.

After the two had seated themselves opposite to each other, the Count hemmed and drew several times a long breath, and then began. "I need not again repeat to you with what heartfelt delight I have hitherto listened to your sermons against the impious doctrine of indulgences. My soul rejoices in unison with you; and each word fell from your lips upon my heart

like morning dew upon the cup of the lily. In mingled hope and suspense, have I learned that you addressed a letter to the bishops of Meissen, Zeitz, Merseburg, and Naumburg, and even to the originator of this present traffic in indulgences, the Electoral Archbishop of Mayence and Magdeburg, entreating them for God's sake to desist from the unhallowed business. But I am full of painful anxiety on your account, lest animated by a holy zeal you enter on the good work too boldly and hastily, and meet the fate which once O, I cannot bear to think of it, much less to utter it. But I have intruded upon your lodging in order to warn you to guide your steps with the utmost caution, in order that the conflict may end in certain victory. Be on your guard, Doctor; for great is the power of the Pope, and he can bend everything to his purposes."

Luther listened with a gentle smile, and then replied: "My dear friend, why do you trouble yourself about me, pray? If the work is of God, it will continue and succeed, though all hell should rage against it. But if it is not of God, then let it fall through and welcome, and me with it. Who is poor Brother Martin? Surely the world will not go to pieces, if he should come to the grave."

The Count's bosom heaved with vehement emotion. "You ought not to speak so, reverend and worthy Doctor. You are an instrument in the hand

of the Most High; and God means to accomplish great things through you. On that account it is not a matter of indifference whether you live or die."

Luther beheld the Count with a gentle shaking of the head. "But what cause have you now for so much anxiety about Brother Martin? Everything is peaceful and quiet, and there is no present exigency."

"No exigency!" echoed the Count bending forward. "So then you do not know what took place yesterday at Jueterbogk?"

"No: what is it?"

"In the public square at Jueterbogk, Tetzal lighted the stake and uttered threats against you."

A slight shudder ran through Luther's frame, and he stood a moment in silent reflection. Then raising himself to his full height, he said with a tone in which derision and sorrow were mingled: "Poor Tetzal! that's like him. He loves to make a noise and talk. The wood had better been given to the poor; for the winter is at hand. My dear Count, be quite easy. I do not fear this Tetzal; for he is a miserable shallow-pate, a mere granny; and therefore he swaggers so loud, after the manner of empty barrels. But whoever besides may be my adversary, I feel in my heart no manner of uneasiness. My defence is with God. If He is for me, who can be against me?"

The Count was about to reply, when without a knock the door opened, and two men entered in haste

with anxious countenances. They were the professor of theology, Nicholas Amsdorf and Lucas Kranach, court painter to the prince Elector.

“Brother Martin,” said the first, crowding in to Luther without seeming to take any notice of Count von Rieneck, “there is an evil whisper in the city, and a mephitic atmosphere as before a storm. Threats are made against you, brother: your life is in peril.”

Lucas Kranach also grasped the hand of Luther while the tears stood in his eyes. “My very dear Doctor, see my concern about you and take care of yourself; otherwise you might easily fall a victim to malice. If you begin the conflict, you stand alone, and what will be the issue? Alas! are not the flames of Jueterbogk a warning which God gives you?”

Luther receded a step. His lips were closed as in holy scorn, his hands raised towards heaven, his eyes shone as with a supernatural lustre, and his ghostly white countenance was as it were transfigured. “In the words of my friends, I hear the voice of God, which says to me: Arise, and confer not with flesh and blood. Thou hast excited the struggle, step boldly into the arena and delay no longer. Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord slothfully. Fear not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness. My dear friends, you wish

to hold me back; but in reality you press me rather forwards. Much too long have I lingered; and through your encouragement to it is now my last fetter broken. Let come what must come. Thou, my God, wilt be with me; for it is not mine own honor that I seek. But for Thee, and Thy dear Son, will I seize the lion by the beard."

The men stood with breathless attention, and ventured no further interruption to words so overpowering. At last, however, Lucas Kranach said with a subdued and tremulous voice: "I listen to your words with deep emotion, my dear Martinus; for I feel the nearness of God and the breath of His Spirit. It would be a sin to wish to hold back a man whom God is impelling to a great work. One thing tell me: What is it you are meditating? For a resolution is visible in your eye, which seems like a fearful *either—or*."

Luther half closed his eyes and made a gesture with his hand: "You will know it shortly; so let me alone at present."

All day long the monk kept his cell; and even during the whole ensuing night his lamp glimmered through the half opaque windows. At his table he sat and wrote, and wrote, till long after midnight. He then threw himself upon his knees and prayed aloud, and wrestled with God, like Jacob, till the morning. More and more importunate were the en-

treaties which ascended to the throne of Him who is so well pleased when men pray to Him: and his tone became more and more joyous and confiding as he already felt, even during the prayer, the presentiment of a favorable answer. But when the first ray of the sun fell through the window, as a token of greeting from God; then rose the suppliant and said: "Amen! Lord, I will not leave Thee, unless Thou bless me. Amen."

At Torgau also, in the bed room of the prince Elector Frederick, on this same night, did the light burn even till morning. The Elector had had an exciting dream, from which he awoke, and by which he was so agitated that he could get no more sleep the whole night. In the morning he caused to be summoned his confidential counsellor and court-preacher, Spalatin, and said to him: "My dear Spalatin, are dreams mere illusions?" "Not always, gracious prince. Some arise from morbid or excited states of the body; and they are only phantoms which dupe and fool us. Others are sent, at times, by divine goodness, to instruct and warn us."

The Elector shook his head in deliberation and said: "Then I will tell you what appeared to me in a dream, this night. I saw a monk who had a pen in his hand. With it he wrote on the Castle Church at Wittenberg many words in letters so large and

plain that they could be read even at Torgau. Yet behold the pen grew in his hand and became longer and longer, until it reached even to Rome and touched the Pope's crown which shook and trembled from the thrust. After I had seen this vision, I awoke and sought for an interpretation, but found none. Perhaps now, you may know what the dream imports."

Spalatin had become uneasy, and the color had left his countenance. He was Luther's friend; and a quick presentiment gave him the significance of the dream. Still he ventured not to intimate this foreboding; only shrugged his shoulders and said: "My gracious prince Elector, God has not vouchsafed to me the gift and skill of Joseph. I think, however, that we should wait patiently and quietly until God Himself, peradventure, give the interpretation of the dream."

Whilst the two men were holding such discourse, hammer blows were sounding at Wittenberg. At the Castle Church stood an Augustinian monk, who nailed upon the door a large paper, where the professors of the university were accustomed to fasten their theses on which they proposed to hold a discussion. Prince Elector, do you hear those hammer strokes! They are God's answer to your dream. Noble Prince, do you know that monk! He is more than a monk; he is an apostle of the Lord; and his pen does reach even to Rome, and at its scratching the

man with the triple crown trembles. Prince, do you hear that roar? That is the storm under which the earth is moved. Do you see flashes? Those are sparks which shall kindle a conflagration which purifies and cleanses the world.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SPARKS IGNITE.

ON a moist, cloudy November morning, Count Eberhard of Erbach rode down from his castle, and turned his horse into the path which led to the Chapel of St. Mary, the rebuilding of which was nearly completed. He had appeared on the site almost every day, and with words and gifts as well stimulated the workmen to have the labor finished by the twenty-first of November; in order that on that day, the festival of the blessed mother, the consecration might take place. It was intended to make the day an occasion of great rejoicing. A vast number of pilgrims were expected. For in the first place, the chapel, though small, was a splendid edifice, brilliant with gold and silver decoration. But, in addition to this, the Count had been so fortunate as to secure for his beloved sanctuary a very precious relic, a lappet of the coat of St. Boniface, the apostle of Germany. This relic, which was preserved in a

golden casket, ruby jewelled, he had obtained, as a special favor, at a great price, from a Friesland bishop. As if God Himself were entering to dwell with him, the Count had brought this casket, in solemn procession, to his court chapel for temporary security; and John Speckel, the mass priest, had been obliged to say a special mass over it. The Count had been on that day in a very exalted tone of mind, and had prepared for his men a sumptuous repast. Yet this state of feeling was not of long duration. Since his interview with Count Philip of Rieneck, he had been all the time very much out of humor and irritable. It seemed as if Philip was right in saying that the peace obtained by a letter of indulgence was only a sham and illusion. But Count Eberhard would not admit this to himself. He rather imputed the blame to Philip, who had, by his tempting thoughts, disturbed the childlike simplicity of his faith. In a certain sense, this was undoubtedly true. The words of Philip haunted him persistently, like flies before a storm, and left him no rest. He was obliged to think of them day and night. He wished to banish them by force; but all his efforts were fruitless. This soured his temper, and even made him harsh to his family, who kept out of his way when they observed that he preferred to be alone.

To-day, also, he came again with a clouded brow

as he rode along. The dense, humid, and chilly fog which shrouded the view, not only settled in a frost upon the Count's beard, but sent its chill into his soul, so that he sank into a deeper gloom.

Arrived in the vicinity of the chapel, he looked up in surprise and listened. "What does this mean?" he muttered to himself. "It is already eight o'clock and yet I hear not a stroke of a hammer." He spurred his horse to a more rapid pace, although the road was a very steep ascent.

As he entered the door of the chapel, he stopped short in amazement. There sat all his workmen gathered around a man who was easily recognized by his garb as a travelling student; and all were listening to him attentively as he read to them something from a paper. At the entrance of the Count the men rose in alarm and bethought themselves of their labors.

"What are you doing there?" stormed the Count, "and who is this stroller that is making my workmen forget their duty?"

The master workman stepped forward with uncovered head. "Pardon, august and worshipful Count. This man brings a new and unheard-of report, which has so taken us by surprise that we forgot our work."

"What is the nature of this report?" demanded the Count.

“Would you be so good as to ask the man himself, gracious Count,” continued the workman; “for we are every one of us unskilled in reading.”

Count Eberhard beckoned the traveller to him and repeated his question.

The other looked the imperious speaker directly in the face and said: “Is it possible, noble sir, that you are not yet apprized of what has taken place at Wittenberg?”

The Count was startled. “At Wittenberg? Nothing, to the present hour, has reached my ears.”

“Indeed! The news has swept through the whole empire like a whirlwind; and everywhere people are talking of the ninety-five theses which the monk Martin Luther posted on the Castle Church door against the sale of indulgences.”

A darker shadow passed over the Count's brow; and, with an uncertain look, he fastened his eyes upon the sheet of paper which the traveller held in his hand. “What say you, fellow? Theses of the heretic?”

The stranger shook his head dubiously, “Do you take Luther for a heretic, noble Count? Then you surely cannot know him. Those who are accurately informed about him, especially those who have seen his face and heard his word, esteem and venerate him as the man for the age, for whom many hearts have waited in silent longing amid the distress of

the times and the low estate of the Church. That he is the right man for the emergency, and that we need wait for no other, is as clear as day; for his words have kindled like a fire, and two weeks are not yet elapsed when the ninety-five theses have sped through the empire, as if the angels of God themselves were the messengers. Furthermore, they have been already translated out of Latin into German, so that every one may understand them."

The Count was visibly struggling with himself. It was sorely against his inclination to inquire about the contents of the paper. He feared to defile himself if he should take the heretic's writing into his hand; and yet his heart was burning in him to know what it could be that was setting the world in an uproar. He stood awhile in gloomy silence; then said curt and sharp, "Give it to me." His eyes swept over the paper which gently rustled in his hand. There he read: "The Reverend Father, Martinus Luther, Doctor of the Liberal Arts and of Theology, from a sincere and true love and special diligence to bring the truth to light, will discuss the following propositions concerning indulgences, and maintain them against the Brother John Tetzel. On that account he begs those who cannot be present in person to discuss them with him, to do the same in writing though absent. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

“When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ says, ‘Repent,’ He means that the whole life of His faithful servants on earth should be a constant and unceasing repentance.”

“This word ‘Repentance’ cannot be understood of the sacrament of penance—that is to say of confession and satisfaction—as administered by the priest.”

“The Pope has no power or intention to remit any other penalty than that which he has imposed, according to his own pleasure or the canons of the Church.”

“The ecclesiastical laws of penance can be imposed only on the living, and in no wise respect the dead.”

“Those priests act ignorantly and wickedly who represent such penances to the dying for purgatory.”

“This noxious plant—changing ecclesiastical and temporal penalties into the pains of purgatory—seems to have been sown while men slept.”

“The Pope remits to the souls in purgatory no penalties which they were under obligation to endure in this life in virtue of ecclesiastical censures.”

“The commissioners of indulgences are in error in saying that, through the indulgence of the Pope, man is delivered from all punishment.”

“Those persons preach a human invention who

pretend that, as soon as the money sounds in the strong box, the soul escapes from purgatory."

"Those who fancy themselves sure of their salvation by means of a letter of indulgence, will go to the devil together with those who teach them this doctrine."

Further the Count did not go. His eyes swam, the letters melted together in a mass, and he was on the point of losing his senses. In his soul raged a violent tempest; from his eyes flashed, as it were, lightning. If he had then had Luther in his power, he would have crushed him.

Some time elapsed before he recovered possession of himself. The terrified workmen had quietly slipped away to their labor; but each stood motionless at his post and did not venture to lift a tool.

At last the form of the Count moved. With a sudden jerk he tore the paper in two and hurled it at the feet of the stranger. "Take yourself out of my sight, instrument of Satan," he shouted in a thundering voice; "and see well to it that you do not again cross my path; otherwise it might go badly with you."

The stranger vanished quickly from the place, with an angry and piercing look at the Count, and sought the distance. Thereupon the Count turned to the workmen: "It will not be good for you, if I should ever again catch you in so

disgraceful a business. Do your work; and leave the rest to those who have authority to minister the word of God."

He mounted his horse and rode slowly away with downcast eyes. Yet he did not trace his course towards his castle, but in the direction of Michelstadt. He felt it necessary to speak with his confessor and to relieve his heart, which was well nigh bursting.

Accordingly he took his way by the village of Steinbach, and was just about to gallop past the Benedictine Convent when a loud confusion of voices arrested his attention and prompted him to listen more closely. Amid the din of voices he could distinguish the name of Luther. He tied his horse to an ash-tree and entered the monastery. He found the entire sisterhood of the institution assembled in the refectory. The Lady Superior was engaged in a warm controversy with an itinerant brother of the neighboring Augustinian Convent; who, at the moment of the Count's entrance, was asserting: "Say what you will, Brother Martinus has been hitherto the pride and ornament of our order; and his ninety-five theses bring to it a new increase of fame."

The Abbess was ashy pale and trembled in her whole frame. "Yes, praise him as a brother of your order.—Your glorying is not good, and his shame is the disgrace of the whole fraternity. The devil

himself has suggested to him the theses; and he who wrote them, will have a hotter place in hell than all the heretics from Simon Magus down to these last days in which we are living. But you, Brother Ambrosius, take yourself from hence; in order that by you, as a heretic, this holy place may not be desecr. . . .”

The voice failed her from nervous exaltation, so that she could not complete her sentence. The nuns were standing with open mouth and eyes, and did not venture to move. As now the Abbess perceived the Count von Erbach who had entered, she hastened to him and pressed warmly his hand. “You have arrived in an evil hour, Sir Count, for a sad controversy disturbs the peace of this house. This Augustinian. . . .”

The Count interrupted her: “I know already what has happened here; for I also have learned of the heresy by the way. But do you, contemptible monk, trundle yourself off, and do penance.”

These words were spoken in a tone so sharp and incisive, that the friar slipped through the door in mortal fear. The Count, also, did not tarry much longer, but rode forward toward Michelstadt.

His poor saddle-horse did not know what to make of his master to-day. For he who was usually so gentle and kind in his treatment of the animal, now jerked the reins irregularly and violently

till its mouth foamed, and drove the spurs into its side till the blood ran.

On the highway not far from the town, the Count was met by the altar priest Speckel, who called out to him while still at a distance, "O, my lord Count! You are coming to Michelstadt, and I was on my way to Fuerstenau. I am obliged to be the bearer of bad news to-day."

"You, too, my reverend friend!" groaned the Count. "Is Satan, then, everywhere on the arena to-day?" and he related to him in further conversation what had happened to him by the way.

"Who is the horseman that comes down the height yonder?" asked the priest, interrupting the Count's narrative, "If my eyes do not deceive me, it is Ulric von Hutten."

The Count recognized the knight at once, and turned his horse into a by-way. "Come, let us avoid him; for I do not wish to meet the strange being. What can he be after in this region? But he sweeps from place to place as restless and changeful as an uneasy conscience."

The turning aside, however, availed nothing. For very soon the tramp of a horse was heard close at hand, and a voice of salutation: "Where away, Sir Count?"

"Is it you, Hutten?" asked Count Erbach, in monosyllables and with an air of indifference, as if

it were an every day phenomenon. "You look for all the world as jolly as a suitor on his way to the wedding."

Hutten spread his homely mouth in a sneering smile and smacked with his tongue: "Ought not one to be jolly when so entertaining a piece is brought on the stage? You yourself also laugh, I hope, Sir Count? You must surely know what has lately taken place at Wittenberg? To be sure it is only the quarrel of a vain monk; but, nevertheless, my very heart laughs in my body on account of it. For, in the first place, it is to be hoped that the monks will bite and devour one another, so that less of the vermin will remain on the earth. In the next place, however, I am thankful to Luther that he has taken the Pope by the ears; which also fulfils the aspiration of many noble spirits; for truly shameful is the vassalage in which the bishop of Rome holds our poor people bound. I forebode a storm as freedom and. . . ."

"Farewell, Hutten," said Count Eberhard, abruptly breaking off the poet's stream of talk, and turning his horse about with a fierce wrench. His tone of feeling became more and more gloomy and irritated; especially as the priest, also, exasperated on account of the habitual scorn of Hutten, broke out in execrations against him. During the conversation with Ulric von Hutten the Count's fingers had

itched to draw the sword. He thirsted for a fight to cool the fever of his soul.

"What say you of the whole affair?" he inquired of his companion.

The priest made no answer for a while, and then replied: "Hutten may be right in saying, that it is a monks' quarrel, arising out of envy and jealousy: for the Augustinians cannot sleep for the fame of the Dominicans which Tetzels has brought to them. At the same time I should never have thought that a few theses of a monk could have ignited such a fire. Even within our town everything since yesterday is in a ferment, each one speaking for or against, as you will soon see for yourself."

The two now passed the town gate, and turned toward the market place.

"Do you hear it?" asked the priest, as they crossed over to the "Blue Fox" inn. "Already when I passed this street an hour ago, and listened under the window, I perceived the dispute and that it related to nothing else but Luther."

Just beyond the market place came another horseman approaching them, who on recognizing the Count urged his horse to a more rapid pace. It was Herr Curt Finkenberg, one of the Count's captains, who had his seat in the village of Rehbach.

"Are you, too, really in town to-day," asked the Count meeting him. "Come with me then to

our excellent confessor, whose house opens so hospitably to visitors."

The priest reached his hand to the captain and bade him welcome. His table, indeed, was frugal to-day; but his wine cellar, not long before supplied, would no doubt content his guests. It was a pity that the gentlemen had not come the day before, which was St. Martin's day; for then he could have fed them sumptuously, and they might have expected a fragrant Martin's goose.

After they had stabled their horses at the neighboring inn, they followed the clergyman into the small and modest house in the rear of the city church.

The conversation turned upon the events of the day, and the captain also could tell of the excited state of the people which he had perceived on his way, especially among the peasants.

"That is a great misfortune to us just now," exclaimed Count Erbach fiercely. "A fermentation has been going on in the brain of these peasants for a long time already, and much inflammable matter is accumulated. If a small spark fall into it, a fire will break out which we shall all regret. They are weary of vassalage, and would like to be free and independent. Here and there also, through the villages and forests, are roaming suspicious characters, not to be trusted; for they look with a

sinister eye upon any one who possesses anything of value. Now comes this ill-starred monk, this child of the devil, this arch-heretic, and hurls the match into the powder magazine. I hope that the Holy Father may act with a swift hand and crush the incendiary, before it is too late. Or, if the Pope is dilatory and looks on with indifference from a distance, that nevertheless Archbishop Albrecht, who has been so bitterly denounced, may proceed against him without delay, and tear up the evil root and branch."

The captain ran his hand through his flowing beard. "Such a thing were certainly desirable; but I have heard some very strange things. For instance, that some of the clergy in high station and authority favor Luther and justify him; as, for example, the bishop of Merseburg, to whom he had previously written; likewise the Prior of the monastery at Steinlausig, Doctor Fleck, a distant relative of mine, is said to have exclaimed at the sight of the ninety-five theses: 'Well done! That man will do it! He is coming, he is coming, whom we have waited for!' And do you not yet know what has happened in Würzburg?"

The Count and the priest bent eagerly forward and listened with open mouth for the new information.

"You know, I suppose, the Bishop Lorenz?" said Finkenberg.

“I know him well,” was the answer. “He is a refined gentleman, with a lofty and noble tone of feeling.”

“He is, indeed,” continued the Captain. “But all the clergy shake the head dubiously in regard to him; inasmuch as he is entirely changed for some time past. He has suddenly removed the Abbot Bernhard of Wuerzburg from his office, after he had earnestly advised him in private. Also his lady friend, Gertrude von Lauterbach, has fallen into disfavor, and been obliged to leave the palace in disgrace. It is said that the bishop sits much alone, absorbed in meditation for hours together. No one was able to discover any cause for all this, till at last it came to light, that one of Luther’s writings was lying on his table. Also, day before yesterday, he made his appearance in the Dominican Convent, after he had learned that in that place a fierce outcry of the monks had broken out against Luther, and with severe words enjoined quiet. No one, he said, ought to condemn another as a heretic before the fact was demonstrated by proofs from Holy Scripture.”

The Count wrung his hands in despair. What will this come to, if even the dignitaries of the Church make themselves associates of heretics? Yet I should never have looked for such a spirit in Bishop Lorenz. It is to me as if the earth must

begin to tremble, and the last day to be at hand. What think you, my very dear Speckel? You say not a single word."

"What could I say," answered the other, starting up from his sunken posture. "My soul is full of sadness."

At the moment a great commotion was audible in the direction of the market-place. The men hastened to the window, where they saw a dense group of men pouring out of the "Blue Fox" inn. They pulled one another and struck out with cudgels, stones also were flying away over their heads.

"See there how David Eisenhart, the shoemaker, stirs up and inflames," blustered out the priest. "He is the ringleader. For a long time I have known him as a bad Christian, who plays truant to the mass and the confessional, and at home fills his shelves with all sorts of books forbidden by the Church, and reviles the holy Church, saying that she is Babylon and the Pope Antichrist. On that account I can easily imagine what such a row signifies. With his associates, of which there are not a few, he has contended for Luther in the tavern, and the passions have broken out on one another until it came to actual blows."

"There must be an end to that," cried the Count in a towering passion. "Finkenberg, we will make for the crowd."

He tore the hesitating Captain away with him, hastened to their horses, and in a few moments the two knights sprang into the *mêlée* with drawn swords. At a thundering call of the Count, a sudden quiet took place. Then a crowd gathered around the horsemen and cried to them: "Help! Sir Count, they are out of their senses."

The Captain was aiming to raise his arm with the sword, when a stone flying close past the Count struck the other in the face, so that he tottered and let his arm fall. He was hit directly in the face, which caused first a copious effusion of blood and then a considerable swelling. A cry of vengeance arose in the multitude, by which the Count's voice was drowned. Soon, however, they dragged a man by force into his presence; and the Burgomaster of Michelstadt, with uncovered head, addressed him: "Noble Sir Count, not one of your own subjects did this deed; but this foreigner, who had previously excited the minds of the people in the inn."

The Count recognized in the culprit the vagrant whom he had driven some hours before out of the Chapel of St. Mary. "So, fellow, you have crossed my path again after all," said the Count to him in a terrific voice. "The consequences will be your own; for it was no empty threat which I made to you. To the tower with him."

The multitude now rushed with vindictive spirit

upon the vagrant, and would have beaten him to death had not the city officials interfered and shielded the offender from violence.

Herr Finkenberg had his wounded eye dressed and bandaged at the parsonage; and soon after the two horsemen rode away to the city. Neither spoke a single word: they had so much in their hearts to agitate and trouble them, and struggled to quiet the inward commotion.

CHAPTER VIII.

STILL ANOTHER FIRE.

AS Count Eberhard already beheld at a distance the battlements of his castle he met, at a cross way, a young man on horseback, in whom he soon recognized his eldest son.

"Is that you, George?" he called out to him. "Where do you come from?"

"I have been to accompany Philip a little way, my dear father," answered the youth. "I wish you had gotten home an hour sooner. Philip would have liked very much to have seen and spoken with you."

"Could he not have waited for me?" asked the father with an altered tone.

"No. He said he only wanted to see how we all were and whether we had already heard of the great event which is moving the whole empire. He also told us a great deal about Wittenberg, and left with us a little book which he wished us to read carefully and think about."

“Yes?”

“Is the building finished, father?”

“Yes.”

“May I ride with you?”

“No.”

George looked at his father, surprised and perplexed at the curt and rough answers. After the lapse of a few minutes, however, he asked, “What can that smoke be which is rising from Chapel Hill?”

“What do you mean, boy?”

“Just now, as I rode up the hill, I saw a dense smoke.”

“It must be the kiln of some charcoal burner. But be quiet, George, and ride behind me.”

The son obeyed; but his face wore an unusual expression. “How strange to-day father”

Just then, from the watch tower of the Castle of Fuerstenau, resounded three times three blasts of the horn—short and sharp.

“What is that?” exclaimed the Count. “That horn gives an alarm of fire. What were you saying, George? That you had seen a smoke?”

“Yes, father.”

“And on Chapel Hill?”

“Yes, father.”

“Ride up to the Castle and summon the men.”

Whereupon he spurred his own horse, and rode with the speed of the wind towards the chapel.

He had not gone far when he met the master workman coming toward him, pale and agitated. "Sir Count" and could get out nothing more.

"Fire in the chapel?" asked the Count breathless.

The master workman nodded in silence, and looked as if crushed to the ground.

The Count rushed onward with desperation. It was not long before he could smell the burning; and then, having reached an open view, the appalling sight burst upon him! His chapel—his beautiful chapel—the delight of his eyes and the pride of his heart—a prey to the flames. Human strength was powerless against the fury of the element. The flames had enveloped the timbers laid only yesterday, and were leaping fiercely from rafter to rafter.

The Count was beside himself. He ventured no further up the hill. He could not bear the ghastly sight from near at hand. He remained long where he was, and the tears streamed from his eyes. "Is, then, everything against me to-day!" he groaned bitterly. "Did I rise from my bed this morning only to experience one evil after another? Thank God, however, that the reliquary is safe. God be praised that the flames did not break out two weeks later."

At last he turned his horse and rode slowly homeward. On the way his castle servants met him with apparatus for extinguishing fire. Nod-

ding to them he said: "You come too late. Go on, however, and see that, at least, no harm is done to the walls."

Up in the castle court, his family were waiting for him uneasy and troubled. They wanted to speak to him in soft and gentle words; but they were terrified at his appearance, and the words died on their lips.

"Hu! father!" said the little Elizabeth, and lifted her hands in a deprecating gesture.

The father paid no attention to the childlike reproach, and said gloomily, "Leave me, let no one come near me to-day."

The Countess with the little new-born Valentine on her arm, put the children gently back and hung caressingly on the arm of her husband. "Not even you, Maria," said the Count disengaging himself, and strode past the court away to the house.

In the hall the aged Daniel met him: "Sir Count" and the words stuck in his mouth at a closer look in his lord's face; and shaking his head ominously the old man watched the Count, who passed by him without a word and with heavy, clanking steps.

It was a sad and lonely meal, which the mother was obliged to take with her children in the evening. For the Count had bolted himself in his chamber and refused food. The family sat with an op-

pressed heart at table. Even the little ones spoke only by stealth with each other; as they saw the mother's countenance so full of sorrow.

Later in the evening, the Countess was sitting with her eldest daughter Margaretta in the family room, her hands unemployed. How suddenly, in human life, do joy and grief often exchange with each other. It was as if Philip had taken joy away with him from the castle.

“Ah! my darling child,” sighed the mother, “there is a great weight upon my heart. It throbs with anguish and inquietude. I have a gloomy foreboding of the future; as if the conflict which the Wittenberg monk has begun with the Pope will be also brought into our house. Philip is animated with joy and hope for Luther and his cause; as if to-morrow the light of truth will shine clear and bright over the whole empire. But I fear, that before the light can shine, the fire must burn and consume; and in this combustion many an individual will be devoured. I think of father with fear and sorrow. What would he say if he should find in our possession the little book which Philip brought with him? I have perused some pages in it, and my soul could cry out for joy at the words which seem written as with a pen from heaven. But a secret anguish weighs down my soul that it cannot rejoice; the pang on account of father, the thought that I have anything secret from him—

that presses upon my heart like a stone, and my conscience says, May a wife at all deceive and impose upon her husband? For some time past the heartfelt confidence between him and me is impaired, that is, since Philip threw the brand into his soul; and several times have I conceived the purpose of speaking with him frankly, of telling him my whole heart, how it is preyed upon by doubts in regard to the teaching of the Church, and instinctively perceives in Luther a witness of the truth. Yet I have never been able to find courage for the effort. But I can bear such a weight no longer: to-morrow I am resolved to speak with him."

Margaretta's breast heaved like a storm-lashed sea. Her cheeks were deathly pale, and tears were glistening in her eyes. She was undergoing a heavy conflict; for her bodeful mind saw in the distance a great trial, arising like a dark storm-cloud out of the collision between her father and her betrothed. She saw herself placed between two conflicting duties. On the one side stood her father who said to her, "Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother"; on the other side was her destined husband who beckoned to her, "Come to me; for to me you belong, to me you have betrothed yourself; and a woman shall leave father and mother in order to cleave unto her husband." But was there, then, no hope that the father and the bridegroom could be reconciled and united in one

faith? Ah, she had so long wrestled in fervent prayer that God would lead their hearts to one another; but where was any result of her entreaties? More firmly than ever had Philip to-day declared himself obliged to remain true to Luther; with more enthusiasm than ever before had he spoken of the man who was now matured to a hero, and whose word should make all new. But the father, on the other hand, did he seem as if his prejudice against Luther had vanished? Alas! had he not, on the contrary, spoken with words even more bitter of the Wittenberg arch-heretic, and confirmed himself in a scornful obstinacy which made him inaccessible to reason or to information which might disabuse his mind of misconception? Had not John Speckel, his confessor and spiritual adviser, come of late much oftener to the castle and sat with the Count in private conversations? Had not the Count this very day returned home savage and moody? The cause of such an angry and sullen mood could not be merely the burning of the chapel. He had undoubtedly learned on the way what, as Philip had reported, was moving the minds of men in all the cities and villages; he had assuredly seen with his own eyes, that the so-called heretic is regarded by many, not at all as a heretic, but as a servant of the Lord. Such thoughts preyed on Margaretta's soul like torture; so that at first she did not know whether to concur in the purpose of her mother, or to dissuade

her from it. At last, however, her native courage gained the victory. She completely overcame her fears and hesitation, and fell upon her mother's neck: "Go, my darling mother, to father and tell him all, come what may. God will take care of the result; for He is with those who love the truth."

Countess Maria felt herself lifted up and strengthened by the decision of her daughter, and breathed more freely and hopefully. "You are my dear child: you are my brave maiden: I always knew that your heart is firm when it is a question of going in the path of duty, even if it demand a sacrifice. Now let us read together the book which Philip gave us: perhaps from it may go out a power to enlighten and strengthen us."

The two sat till midnight over Luther's "Discourse on Absolution and Grace," a further expansion and illustration of his ninety-five theses, which Luther had published together with these. They read the book through slowly and thoughtfully at one sitting; for it held them enchained as with a fascination; and as they finally closed it, the Countess said with tear-bedimmed eyes: "Thanks, Philip, a thousand thanks. It is a precious gift, more precious than gold and jewels. Truly, if this Luther is not a man of God and a prophet of the truth, then must he be a devil transformed into an angel of light. Oh! now I comprehend how Philip cleaves to the man

with such enthusiastic reverence and devotion, that he says he could lay down his life for him. In my soul it becomes day. I feel that I am obliged to break away from and unlearn my whole view of a religious life; for it is all falling to pieces in my hands. If only father would read this little book. I am confident that his state of mind would then of necessity undergo a change."

"But will he read it?" asked Margaretta softly.

The Countess mother folded her hands and lifted her eyes with fervor towards heaven, saying: "Lord, have mercy on him and on us."

CHAPTER IX.

NEW CLOUDS.

NEXT morning, as the sun emerged with a pale lustre from behind the pines, Count Eberhard of Erbach was sitting in his room at a table, on which was lying an open book, written with his own hand. Despite all the mental agitation of the previous day, he had enjoyed a profound and undisturbed sleep; and a sound, unbroken sleep has a beneficial effect upon mind and body alike. The hardness had vanished from his features, his eyes were restful, and about his mouth played a gentle expression of sadness. He could not himself explain this sudden revolution, this calm after the storm, this gentleness of tone after the harshness of yesterday, with which he had repelled from him even his family.

He turned the leaves of the book, and his eyes wandered over its pages with occasional nods of his head denoting his satisfaction. In this book was recorded, in large and firm characters, all that he had done from his youth up for his soul's health; and this

was not a little. The volume contained a hundred pages; and of these more than half were filled. There stood recorded a goodly array of paternosters, ave marias, and rosaries; masses paid for, alms bestowed on the poor, offerings to church objects, penances and castigations, pilgrimages and processions, foundations in churches and convents, dedications to the saints, and especially to the blessed Virgin, whom he, following the example of his ancestors, had chosen as his patroness and guardian.

“My account stands well,” he murmured to himself when he had perused the last page. “I do not come to God with empty hands. I have done what I could Or, should it not yet suffice? Should something be still wanting to my salvation? O! who will tell me this? Who will give me certainty—infallible certainty? Holy Virgin, Mother of God, if God requires from me anything further, tell it me; I will do it willingly. Tell me especially, whether I could do anything for the glory of God and the welfare of the Church against the detestable heretic. Even should I be required, for such an object, to make a sacrifice, I will bring it; for I know from the mouth of the priest that such a meritorious act will be highly esteemed in heaven, and will amply cover whatever is wanting in the good works of a man for his salvation.

The Count was interrupted in these meditations

by a step in the vestibule; and immediately after his wife entered in a light and airy morning dress, which displayed to advantage the exquisite grace of her symmetrical figure. With a hearty morning salutation, she advanced to her spouse, and extended to him her small, delicate, lily-white hand.

“I was just about to come to you,” answered the Count, “and you come to me. I wanted to crave pardon from you, that I was so rough and stern toward you and the children, yesterday.”

The Countess felt an inward thrill of delight; and, full of hope, she seated herself beside her husband on the high-backed, leather-cushioned double-settee. “Your words, dearest husband, take from my heart a weight of anxiety. For it has pressed heavily upon my spirit for some time past, that your manner towards your family was not as formerly. Was not Castle Fuerstenau, once the home of domestic happiness and the sweetest concord? Was not the invariable expression of our guests: ‘It is good to be here?’ Now a November frost has fallen upon the abode of peace and love. Now Count Eberhard of Erbach withdraws gloomy and morose from the circle in which before he found so much delight and was wont to refresh himself with the opening charms of his offspring and to renew his youth in the companionship of the young. Now the merry laughter of the children is hushed. For there is a deep sea-

sibility in the child's breast; and the gloom of its parents throws a shadow also upon the joy of a child. O my husband, what can your wife and your children have done to you that you should treat them so?"

The Count drew his wife to him, with all the signs of deep emotion; and, with a countenance abashed and averted, said: "Maria, you reproach me, and I hear it patiently, inasmuch as my conscience accuses me for having suffered the innocent to feel the effects of my ill-humor. For it is not you that have awakened in me the evil spirit which, like a goblin, haunts me day and night, and darkens my life so that I avoid intercourse with men. This, however, may well afford some excuse for me. You would surely judge me with less rigor if you knew the distress and burden of my heart."

Countess Maria interrupted him: "Not unknown to me is the cause of your trouble, husband dearest to my heart; and I even came up to you now that I might speak with you a quiet word about it, which really ought to have been done sooner. Here is the secret. You are so incensed against Philip and take pains not to speak of him, because he is not in exact accord with you in religion, and because you think him an associate of a heretic."

"And so he is, too," said the Count impetuously, whose brows had already contracted again.

“Preserve your composure, my husband, and hear me patiently to the end,” said the Countess Maria gently, at the same time laying her hand on his arm. “It is written: ‘Try the spirits, whether they are of God.’ Have you proved before condemning? Reflect a moment. Our Philip does not belong to those dissolute fellows who, in the wantonness of youth and license of the flesh, attack sacred things; but from his youth up he has had a grave and earnest disposition, and there has been no stricter Christian, no truer son of the Church than he, as even the confessor of Count Rieneck testifies. Not blindly has he rushed into fellowship with Luther; but with steadfast persistence has he proved the man before he sought his friendship and companionship. Now, indeed, with the deepest reverence and confidence he adheres to him; and it must surely be the false speech and calumny of enemies which denounces Doctor Luther as a heretic. If a man like Count Philip of Rieneck is numbered among Luther’s friends, then Luther himself cannot be an unbeliever and heretic.”

The Count rose from his seat impatient. The gentle movement which had come over him again subsided; and his tone was bitter when he answered: “Maria, Maria! has the heretic found an advocate in you, too? Listen to me. The very thing which has most of all aggravated my displeasure is, that

Philip has infected you and Margareta with his unbelief, and brought you over to his side, when you ought, by right, to stand by your husband and father. Who is Philip? A stripling of some twenty years. The blood flows hot in the veins of youth; and an easy game has the seducer with a judgment unripe and a defective experience of life. But I am a mature man; and think you that I have not proved the spirits? In earnest and persistent inquiry have I thought over the subject, many a blessed night, finding no sleep; and always again has that approved itself to me as the truth, which the Church teaches and the Pope commands. But do I stand alone in my judgment? You will observe that all true Christians are one with me; while those who glorify the Wittenberg monk are freethinkers and the rabble who preach revolution and aim to subvert all order. To them this man Luther is very acceptable; since they have long been waiting for some one to arise and place himself at the head of the movement. It is the devil's seed which this Luther is sowing; and woe betide us if the same spring up. We shall weep and lament. Think of the only possible result, if the peasants become furious and break their chains. God's servant, therefore, is every one who lends his aid to strangle the devil's brood in its birth."

The Countess forced herself to suppress the tumult

in her heart, and said with studied composure: "Ah, my dearest husband, let it not vex or weary you if I say again, 'Try the spirits, whether they are of God.' Through whom have you knowledge of Luther? Not from his own writings; for then you could not speak of him as you do. It is from the mouth of his enemies alone that you derive your impression. Come and see whether this man is an instrument of Satan, or whether God the Lord speaks by his mouth. This little book Philip left behind with us yesterday, that we might know for ourselves whether or not he has sufficient ground and reason for his veneration of Luther."

Therewith she drew from her bosom Luther's little book on Absolution and Grace and reached it to her husband.

With a gesture of abhorrence the latter retreated a step and held both his hands before him in the attitude of refusal. He was about to reply, when the aged Daniel thrust his gray head in at the door and announced the confessor.

"Let him come in forthwith," commanded the Count. "God sends this man to me that he may be my stay and helper against my own wife, who is not ashamed, behind her husband's back, to stain her hand and soul with heretical books. Alas, that it should ever have come to this with us."

A heavy sigh escaped the Countess, and her lips

quivered with anger and repugnance. The last remark of the Count had entirely escaped her, occupied as she was with the thought of the visit announced, which was to her painful and unwelcome beyond measure. Now her last hope of coming to a harmonious understanding with her husband on the subject of her anxieties was extinct; for she well knew the unbounded influence of this man over the Count. She had therefore never been able to feel any liking for him. Her high sense of honor and rectitude felt a natural antipathy to the crafty indirection of the monk, his unsteady and suspicious look, the eel-like smoothness of his words, and the honeyed sweetness of his voice. Of late he had become the object of her complete and strong aversion; since more frequently than ever he had come up to the Castle and sat much with the Count in private conversation. It was but too plain to her, what the subject of those interviews must be. For, as her husband, since the dispute with Philip, had been a different man to his family, morosely withdrawing himself from them, and speaking unkindly to them; there could be no doubt that this change was due to the constant agitation of the Confessor.

As the Count observed the repugnance of his wife to the announced visit, he said in a tone of which the severity and emphasis were not adapted to conceal a certain misgiving and embarrassment:

"For what reason do you feel this strange antipathy to Father Speckel? It is painful to me to see that my wife shuns with distrust one to whom an unreserved confidence attracts me."

The Countess was about to make some reply when the door opened noiselessly and the obese form of the friar entered panting asthmatically. He was unable from exhaustion to utter a single word; and with gestures of salutation wiped the sweat from his highly colored face with the sleeve of his cowl, at the same time casting a sidelong glance of suspicion at the Countess.

Whilst she withdrew silently to a window recess, the Count subserviently led the monk gasping for breath to a seat; and after friendly salutations asked: "What is the reason of this early visit and unusual haste? Tidings of weighty import I surely read in your countenance."

With another quick and furtive glance at the Countess, the friar got out in broken syllables: "Vengeance—follows—swift—upon—the heretic."

"What say you?" exclaimed the Count, eagerly addressing the priest, with an ill-concealed expression of delight and surprise. Meanwhile the Countess grew deathly pale and held her hand upon her heart in breathless suspense.

With an appearance of inward satisfaction the priest continued; "The axe—is already—laid—to

the root—of the tree. From Jueterbogk comes—the news—that Tetzel—laying aside—the sale of indulgences—will assume—with all his energy—his office—of Apostolical Inquisitor. Already has he pressed the matter urgently upon the conscience of the Archbishop Albrecht, and kindled his wrath against the apostate. In the meantime he has got possession of the ninety-five theses, together with the other writings of Luther, and burnt them at the stake. Such an example has wrought a speedy effect on all the faithful, and called forth much emulation. Also the prior at the convent of Hoechst, that valiant man and zealous defender of the Holy Church, intends this evening, in order to strike terror into the enemies of the faith and also to encourage the faithful, to hold an inquisition. This is what I have come in haste to inform you of. Should you desire to witness this spectacle, noble Count, remember that the pile will be lighted at early twilight.”

The Countess breathed more freely. She had apprehended something worse for Luther. Already had her anguish foreboded the Pope’s ban, or even the assassin’s dagger at his heart.

Without was raging a violent storm, which shook open the window at which Maria was standing. While exerting herself to close it again, Luther’s book fell from her hand.

The priest, whose lynx-eyes had for some time

peered behind him in curious and furtive glances, could now read the title. He sprang forward toward the Countess and, with affected politeness, sought to take up the book; in which, however, the Countess anticipated him.

The priest's eyes snapped and his mouth spread into a broad grin. "Aye, aye, what do my eyes see, my lady Countess? Do you pollute your pure hands with such un ?"

He did not finish the word; for a piercing and imperious look of the Countess suppressed the last syllable on his lips, and he retreated abashed. Still he belonged not exactly to the timid natures. He soon recovered his self-possession, and in a somewhat changed and obsequious tone continued: "Excuse my hasty speech, worthy lady Countess, which was prompted by my zeal for the Lord. I did not intend to wound your feelings, and far from me be the suspicion that you could have any fellowship with a child of Satan. No doubt you procured the book only for the purpose of being able to know the heretic from his own words, and the more profoundly to abhor him. A convenient opportunity, therefore, presents itself to visibly demonstrate your abhorrence, by handing over to me the heretical fabrication to be consigned this very evening to the flames."

The Countess raised herself up to her full dignity

and advanced two steps nearer to the priest, who shrunk back with awe. Countess Maria appeared terrible in her righteous displeasure and moral indignation. Her beautiful eyes, which usually beamed forth as tender and mild as two small golden stars, now glowed like two burning coals; and her voice, at other times clear and sweet as a little silver bell, rang now like a trumpet tone as she said to the friar: "Away from me! I am able to be my own counsellor, and may very well dispense with your service." Thereupon she glided, majestic as a queen, through the door. The friar turned deathly pale, and was unable to speak a word; even the Count was astounded and knew not whither to turn his eyes. He had never before seen his wife thus.

Outside, in the dimly lighted passage, stood the Countess, her hands pressed against her heaving bosom. She was frightened at herself. What had she done? To what words had she permitted her anger to hurry her! Alas, was not her last ray of hope extinguished? Her eyes wandered hither and thither, unsteady and troubled; till at last they were directed upward and acquired an expression wholly different—that of heavenly repose. "Lord, I thank Thee," she prayed, "that Thou hast filled a feeble woman with Thy strength and holy courage. Leave not Thine hand-maid henceforward, for I see heavy days at hand."

She made her way to the Kemnate, or ladies' chamber, where Margaretta waited for her in a state of painful suspense. The poor maiden soon knew all that had passed; and the two sat in sad and palpitating silence, listening for the footsteps of the Count, whose approach they apprehended each moment. Yet they were kept in their agonizing suspense two full hours. Then first they saw the priest's clumsy figure shuffling itself across the castle court, and at the same moment also the Count stood before them.

He looked very pale, his eyebrows were sternly knit together, and his lips were firmly compressed.

The Countess let her eyes fall to the ground, Margaretta clung silently to her mother as if to shield herself, and an awkward silence ensued. The Count seemed to expect an address, perhaps also a request for pardon, from his wife, that she had forgotten due reverence for a consecrated priest. When neither one nor the other followed, his look became still more cloudy; and turning to Margaretta he said: "I am your father and the one who has legitimate authority over you; although for some time past you have little heeded the parent who has ever loved you, and with a true father's care has kept your best interest in view. I say then to you: Your soul's health is in peril, if you remain closely allied to one who has departed from the truth of God and become an apostate. Hear, then, Margaretta, what is about

to take place. At this moment a messenger is saddling his horse in order to convey to Count Philip of Rieneck my will: *He must renounce either the heretic or his betrothed.*"

In the Kemnate resounded a piteous and heart-rending cry: "My father!" and like one crushed, Margareta made a tottering effort to reach the remorseless man. But the door had already closed behind him, and rapid hoof-strokes were heard from the court below, which fell like hammer-blows on the heart of the damsel, who, robbed of her affianced husband, must now weep out her life in loneliness.

CHAPTER X.

AN INQUISITOR'S PROCESS.

FROM the blue-brown breastbone of the St. Martin's goose, an early and severe winter had been prognosticated. It did actually set in according to the prediction. For it was still in the first half of November, and the ground was already frozen hard as a bone, and standing water stiffened to ice. To-day also a yet thicker snow fell from the clouds, and a more cutting wind from the north-east was angrily tossing the tree-tops. Everywhere the forest groaned, and here and there a dry limb dropped with a crash to the ground. The forest birds sought protection in the thick branches; but were frequently obliged to forsake their precarious shelter and protect themselves against the storm in flight. Moreover, the wolves were howling and the red deer rushing affrighted through the crackling brushwood. It was a storm into which, as the saying is, one could not have the heart to drive a dog.

Old Daniel, burying his hands in his pockets, with a dubious shake of the head, looked from the house steps at his master as the latter was exerting himself to mount the impatient and stamping horse; and with anxious countenance asked: "Will you risk it to-day, my gracious lord?" But he received no answer, at least none from the Count. The horse, however, by his snorting and coughing did answer, that on such a day the Count might surely find something a little better and more desirable to do than riding out.

To the convent Hoechst it was a good long stretch of road, hard on to four hours if one rode briskly. The Count, however, consumed full six hours to-day; since he was obliged, several times during the ride, to halt in the forest for rest and to let his wearied horse take breath. So that he did not reach his destination until the dusk of the evening was setting in. He came in the very nick of time; for just then the pile of fagots had been completed, about which a dense crowd of people were assembled, chiefly peasants from the places around and a few burghers from Neustadt. The lay brothers of the convent had no little trouble to get the materials of the pile ignited. For the thickly whirling snow-flakes fell hissing upon the kindling fire; also a sudden gust of wind several times extinguished the torches, as though it were unwilling to suffer Dr. Luther's books to be burned.

At last, however, the work was accomplished; and now rang out the convent bells whose tones, broken by the storm, floated as it were moaning and wailing in the atmosphere. The gates of the monastery opened, and poured forth a large dusky troop of monks and nuns, their heads enveloped in cowls, and crosses, and banners in their hands, slowly moving like a funeral procession to the singing of a Latin choral song. In the midst of the procession was carried along, by two executioners' servants, the skin of a cow. On the same lay a bundle strapped together with red and white cords, together with a gigantic effigy of straw, with a red scroll about the neck, on which was written in bold and legible characters: MARTINUS LUTHER. In order to make these objects conspicuously visible to the gaping crowd, twelve cloister servants apparelled as devils walked on both sides, with flaming pitch torches in their hands, which with their lurid flickering light intensified the spectral sight, and with their stifling smoke oppressed the lungs of the bystanders. The monks and nuns were obliged to exert their lungs to the utmost in order to overpower with their singing the howling of the storm; and this struggle of human defiance with the fury of the elements produced an impression of awe.

At last appeared also the Superior of the convent, with two abbots from the neighborhood, and a bishop who in his altar vestments came forward mounted

on a horse and placed himself at the head of the procession.

After the procession had reached the pile of fagots and arranged themselves about the same in a circle, the bundle was lifted from the cow-skin with pitchforks, and, amid numerous crossings, was cast into the flames. In like manner the effigy was thrown in; which, however, was too long for the pile, so that the head and feet projected on the two sides.

A psalm was now chanted in a monotonous and melancholy tune. "O Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah. For the sin of their mouth, and the words of their lips, let them be taken in their pride, and for cursing and lying which they speak. Consume them without mercy, consume them that they may not be; and let them know that God is ruler in Jacob, and unto the ends of the earth. Selah."

This song was of course in Latin—the priesthood and the monks were always something better than ordinary people; and they must accordingly have also a peculiar language.

After the singing was ended, the Superior approached the pile, made the sign of the cross on his forehead and breast, and cried with a strong voice: "Consume, ye flames, consume the work of Satan, that nothing thereof remain but dust and ashes. Just

as the heretic's likeness here burns away in earthly fire, may also his soul burn without redemption in everlasting fire. Awake, ye who sleep; and be alarmed, all ye enemies of God; that this may not be your doom also. But you, who have come from a distance to witness this judgment, go hence and publish to all the world that God is not mocked, and that He suffers not the honor of His vicar to be assailed."

The monks and nuns raised a fearful howl of anathema, while the rest of the people chimed in with frantic pleasure; the flames meanwhile curling and crackling were doing their work of destruction.

"Aye, aye, are you also here, noble Sir Count?" cried the Superior after a while, when he got sight of Erbach. "Will you go with us into the convent? For it is not possible for you to ride back to Fuers-tenau to-night. It is a diabolical storm and uproar in nature, as if God were saying an Amen to what is doing here."

The Count thankfully accepted the invitation, and had his lodging for the night in the convent, after he had been well cared for out of the kitchen and cellar.

The next morning he awoke amid a great uproar and commotion. He drew on his clothes hastily, and inquired of a nun whom he met running in great consternation, what was the matter? From her he got an excited answer: "A trick, a daring and rascally

trick has been perpetrated! The effigy, to be sure, has been burned to ashes, as was proper, but not the books. They had been tied up too carefully, so that the flames could not get at them at all."

"So these are lying still uninjured," said the Count, abruptly breaking in on her tale and his eyes strained eagerly. "Alas! such a thing is very unfortunate. It will be a triumph to the enemies. They will say: See there! You cannot destroy Luther's word and work. A fire must be kindled anew with all speed, and the bundle untied before it is thrown in."

The nun lifted her hands with a gesture of despair. "It is too late for that. Some thief has been at the pile over night, and has removed the bundle, so that not the smallest trace of it can be discovered."

At this moment the Superior came up the cross passage, with hasty step, pale and agitated in his whole frame. "Have you already been informed of what has happened?" he asked of the Count. The latter nodded to him in silence and with a puzzled look.

"This is a bad piece of business," groaned the Superior. "It will only bring damage and prejudice on the good cause which we were aiming to benefit."

"Did you immediately send out runners to find and seize the thief?" inquired the Count.

The Superior, with lively gesticulation, replied:

"Yes, indeed, they have been sent in all directions to search; yet I have small hope from that step, for one who could play so daring a trick may be safely considered a cunning and cautious fellow." Thereupon the Superior rushed wildly onward throwing about his arms in the vehemence of his emotion.

The ground burned under the Count's feet, and he soon had his horse saddled.

It was a beautiful morning. The sun shone lustreously on the fresh fallen snow, and a flock of jackdaws whirled in merry circles in the serene air. How great the change from one day to the next, in nature and in the feelings of the Count! The bad weather of yesterday was not able to make the least impression upon him; for his soul was in a tone of devout and joyous elevation. But to-day the sunshine pains his eyes; for his heart is writhing within in anger and wrath.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LAST OF HIS LINE.

JUST where the Franconian Saale tumbles into the Main, and not far from Gemuenden, in the Spessarts Mountains, towered majestic and threatening Castle Rieneck. It was an ancient and venerable pile, over whose forest of pinnacles and turrets the storm of four hundred years had roared and passed away. With a powerful sceptre had the Counts of Rieneck ruled an ample territory, of which this castle was the centre, and won for themselves respect and consideration among the German noble families. Now, however, in the year 1517, the sun was setting, and the line was dying out. Even so mighty and illustrious a lineage as that of Rieneck could not escape the universal law of bloom and decay. The spacious halls of their ancestral castle were empty, in which through centuries the joyous voices of children and the silver goblets of men had rung in unison. At present only two survived as bearers

of the proud name: Count Dietrich and his son Philip; and of these two the first was lying on his last couch, his already clammy hand buried in that of his son.

“It avails nothing,” said the aged man in a feeble voice, “to defy fate and to banish death from my thoughts by delusive hopes. He is near, and will soon reach out his hand after me. I do not deny, my son, that the separation is hard to me. For I had earnestly besought God that I might survive until the day when, in the loneliness of Rieneck, a daughter might make her entrance at the side of my son, like a morning ray of hope that our waning race was about to revive again. God’s inscrutable counsel has denied me this wish of my heart. I depart without having embraced one grandchild. Yet not altogether without consolation must I be gathered to my fathers in the tomb; since it has been granted me to lay my hand in blessing upon the head of my son’s betrothed. Yes, God bless your chosen bride, who is dear to me and highly valued as a daughter, a model of virgin beauty and of pious sentiment. God bless you both with His choicest gifts and richest benediction—you whom He graciously permits to see better times than your fathers saw. My dimming eyes perceive the blush which reddens the morning and heralds a new day; my spirit detaching itself from the earth presages morn-

ing fragrance after a long gloomy night. I see everywhere the germination and springing; I hear a movement among the dry bones; I see the old crumbling and a new life waking from the ruins; I hear a song like that of the nightingale, before which the Pope trembles and the monks turn pale; but I see the people stand and listen to the new melody, and applaud the singer. I have not seen the man face to face; I know of him only what you, my son, have told me; but he now stands there before my view, quite distinct and visible. What a man he is! How his form towers! How his eyes beam! How he holds aloft the Bible, as if all the world should see it and read it! I see a vast crowd thronging to hear his discourse, who gaze upon him in love and reverence. Is it a phantom? Do my eyes deceive me? No, no, this can be no illusion. My senses are weak, but my eyes see clearly—*that is Luther*, whom the goodness of God shows to me before I die. My son, he will accomplish it from whose side shall flow streams of living water."

The dying man, during this speech, had raised himself up with wonderful strength; his eyes beamed with a supernatural and, as it were, prophetic lustre; and Philip felt in his soul the awe and solemnity of eternity, as though the powers of the world to come were moving about him. It is usually a great and solemn moment when soul and body are parting,

when time and eternity meet and touch; and here at this time especially, when to the spirit in the moment of release from the bounds of the flesh was vouchsafed a glimpse of the mysterious future, and the invisible stood unveiled as to a superhuman vision.

Philip did not venture to move. He held his father's chilled hand firmly in his own, and fixed his gaze as if spellbound upon the eyes in which the lustre of a transfiguration was slowly fading, as the blush in the evening sky when the sun is sinking behind the hills. The voice, too, which had raised itself to astonishing power, sank again; and in a scarcely audible whisper the Count said: "Lay me back, my Philip; I am very tired. Yet do not leave me, but remain, that you may pray for me."

In the front hall steps became audible; and a servant—old Jonathan—entered softly and announced a messenger from Fuerstenau just arrived. Philip started up in alarm, and gave directions to introduce the man immediately. He met him in the adjoining apartment and received from him, with his own hand, a letter. At the first glimpse of the handwriting Philip shuddered. "From the Count himself?" A presentiment of evil oppressed his heart and well nigh deprived him of breath. Scarcely had he re-entered the sick chamber and taken a hasty glance at the letter, when the paper fell from his

hand and a loud groan from him awakened the slumbering father.

"What has happened, my son?" asked the dying parent.

"Nothing, my father," replied Philip, carefully striving to regain his composure. But the old man saw plainly that there was something, and something, too, very serious which could so unman his vigorous son. "Tell me the truth, my Philip, and conceal nothing from me," said the aged man again. "Otherwise I cannot die in peace."

His eyes were fastened so importunately upon his son, that the latter could hesitate no longer. "Alas! Father, our sun is going down. The jewel of my life is to be torn from me without pity. Here Margareta's father writes to me in short, cold words as follows: 'If you wish to be my son, Philip, then act worthy of your father, and turn from the way of error to the truth. Either you must give up the heretic or your bride. You must not, however, presume to cross the threshold of my house, until, in your heart changed and turned from the evil way, you penitently seek my forgiveness. To this may God help you by His grace.'"

In the bed there was a deep and heavy sigh. The old man's hand moved to his breast, his eyes closed, and his heart became still.

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This was too much for even a powerful soul like that of Philip von Rieneck. He sank as one crushed into his chair, his senses left him, and a beneficial loss of consciousness released him from this hour of inexpressible sorrow.

Yet the respite was brief; and on awaking from his stupefaction, his wretchedness lay with double weight upon his soul. In one hour bereaved of his father and of his bride, how was he to bear it?

Long did he pace the wide and empty halls in aimless conflict; and they seemed now more spacious and desolate than ever before. At length one of the servants reminded him that the messenger from Fuerstenau was still waiting below. Philip went to his room, took out a sheet of paper, and wrote with an unsteady hand:

“MY WORTHY SIR COUNT:

“Am I then to be bereaved at once of two precious beings? At the very moment your messenger brought to me the incredible news that you are resolved to break a tie which only death ought to sever, my beloved father departed out of the land of the living. I am not just now in a state either to make a sudden reply to your letter, or at all to give utterance to the deep sorrow of my heart. Only this one thing is herewith communicated, that I expect you at the obsequies which will take place three days hence at Castle Rieneck.”

The messenger was dismissed with instruction to ride home in haste, in order that the Count might receive the invitation in season to be present at the funeral.

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Amid the illumination of four and twenty wax candles, and under the shadow of lofty cypress trees, stood the sarcophagus in the great hall of Castle Rieneck. Choir boys swung the censer of incense around it, while on an altar erected behind it two priests muttered the mass. Outside, in the court, thronged a dense multitude of people, subjects of the Count, many of whose eyes were filled with tears; and not of the women only, for the Count Dietrich had been to them an upright lord who gave to each one his own and cared for his dependents like a father.

In the back part of the hall had assembled a number of counts and knights, who were standing still and silent with uncovered head. One whom Philip had expected with the most sorrowful longing had not appeared. In his place, Sir Neidhart Faeustlin had arrived about two hours before, in order to give to the deceased the escort of honor. Yet in the confusion of the funeral arrangements and the reception of guests, it had not been possible for Philip to learn the reasons why Count von Erbach remained absent; and even after the deposition in the family

vault, there was likewise no opportunity for inquiry since the funeral cups lasted until far into the night, so that not until next morning, after the guests all separated, did Count Philip seek out the Burgvogt of Count von Erbach, take him into a quiet apartment, and bolt the door.

“Excuse me, worthy Sir Faeustlin,” began Philip, “that I still detain you. For I have something important to speak with you about, and which you will easily anticipate; since, as the confidential friend of Count von Erbach, you must have information of that which lies nearest my heart. Tell me, then, in the first place, frankly, for what reason did not the Count your master appear in his own person to render the fitting respect to Count Dietrich von Rieneck?”

The Burgvogt cleared his throat in embarrassment; and it was easy to see that it was hard for him to speak. For he also had a warm and true affection for Philip, and heartily sympathized with him in his trouble. At last he said in a broken way: “If you really did hope that Count von Erbach would set foot in your house, you very little understand his peculiar disposition. It gives me pain to be obliged to speak it. But his anger towards you is in full heat; especially since you brought to his house the little book of Luther, whereby he believes his dwelling profaned. I have really tried every means to calm

the tumult of his mind and to mollify his displeasure. Yet he became rough in his manner to me as he never was before; so that I was frightened and held my peace. You doubtless know also how his whole soul, in pious zeal, is devoted to the tenets and precepts of the Church. No one dares oppose him on this subject: and if any one do so unwittingly, though the Count is certainly in other respects a most courteous gentleman, he becomes a consuming fire to all about him. Even his own family are now sitting in painful humiliation and dread, grieving over the destruction of domestic peace and from seeing his countenance changed toward his own household. The confessor John Speckel, who always had a powerful influence over the Count, shows himself now more frequently in the Castle. It was this man, too, that incited the Count to write that wretched letter to you."

Philip paced the room with long and hasty strides, his hands cramped behind his back, and his head downcast to the earth. He made not a word of reply.

After a while the Vogt approached him with a feeling of sympathy, and laying his hand upon his shoulder said: "Sir Count, what then do you mean to do? Will you abandon little Margarett?"

Philip made a sudden start and colored; a cry of anguish escaped his lips; and his breast heaved with

a deep groan. "Herr Vogt," he exclaimed with a wild energy, "in that case my sun goes down and it becomes utter night. What is life to me without Margaretta? A desert with nothing but death all around me. I am like a flower placed in the shade, which can no more see and feel the sun. It has no color, no fragrance; it dies a lingering death. Not until I knew Margaretta did I know what life is. The birds then sang more delightfully for me, the flowers had a sweeter perfume, the sun shone brighter, men were much dearer to me, my heart was jubilant and leaping with joy, as though heaven bending to earth had entered my inmost breast. Margaretta, delight of my eyes, star of my life, you who, like a saint, have ennobled and purified my heart, so that in nearness to you, even in fancy, I am incapable of any unworthy thought; must I let you go? Without you must I sorrow in these dreary and lonely halls? Lord God in heaven, Thou knowest my love; for of Thee it was first poured into my heart. Thou also knowest that without this love I cannot live."

The Vogt had listened with inward satisfaction and cheering hope. "Compose yourself, noble Herr Count," he said with warmth and tenderness, grasping both of Philip's hands in his. "You must never, by any means, be deprived of the jewel. You must live and be happy. There is really one way"

Count Philip tore himself loose as if he had been

bitten by a serpent. "O, to what do you advise me, Faeustlin! You would fain heal my heart, but you would deeply wound my conscience. Ought I to sacrifice the truth? Should I belie my deepest, holiest convictions? With the sting of an accusing conscience must I seek happiness in Margaretta's arms? To fall away from the truth of God which one has known and received into the heart; to deny, betray, and trample under foot the Lord Jesus Christ—is not this that fearful sin which has no forgiveness, either in this world or in that which is to come? If I should even appear thus before Margaretta, an apostate, a betrayer, under the curse of God; would Margaretta herself accept me? No, I can see her, as she is terrified at me, turns her face away from me, and says: 'Away from me! you are Philip no longer!'—Herr Vogt, what do you demand? In your words I hear the voice of the tempter! Luther, Luther, I see you in holy indignation, a frown upon your brow and your hand lifted in menace, and in my ears resound your words of thunder: 'Philip, is this your loyalty? Is this your zeal for the truth of God? Look at me: I offer up my all for the cause of the Lord, my body and life I give joyfully to Him; and *you* ?'"

The Vogt shook mournfully his gray head. "I honor the tender feeling of your conscience, Herr Count; but do you know, then, with infallible cer-

tainty, whether your conviction of the faith is really founded in the truth? Is there not such a thing as an erring conscience? If you swear by Luther, you swear only by a man; and where is the man who is not liable to some error?"

The Count's cheeks, at first as white as the chalk on the wall, now colored with scarlet. "What do you mean, Faeustlin? In your discourse I perceive clearly that you understand Luther not even at a distance. What you suggest would give Luther pain, awaken all his wrath,—that any one should swear by him, or build upon the *man* Luther. For it is not *his own* honor that he seeks, but the honor of God; not *his own* wisdom that he urges, but all his efforts and struggles are aimed at the one object of bringing forth the word of God again from the rubbish of human opinion and error. He points every one who comes to him, away beyond himself to Christ as the source of divine wisdom, and says: Search for yourself, and see whether it is so. If the popes and their adherents had not overloaded and concealed the true source of knowledge and grace, Luther might have had rest and would not have needed to expose his precious life to the jaws of his adversaries."

"I will not debate with you at length on these matters, my gracious lord," said the Vogt, "more especially as I perceive from the fire of your discourse that I should never after all bring you to a

different opinion. But with sorrow and reluctance do I abandon the effort. For the dear little Margareta is waiting in feverish anxiety and suspense for my return; and I am afraid to appear before her eyes with the terrible message that Count Philip has no pity for her distress."

Again the glow vanished from Philip's cheeks, and his face became pale and rigid as that of one dead. He had no longer control of himself and fell into the arms of the Vogt with the piteous cry: "My dear Faeustlin, take pity upon me, and do not lacerate my wounds. Speak to me another word, which may comfort me. Oh is there in the whole wide world a more unhappy man than Count Philip von Rieneck?"

The Vogt stroked in a fatherly way the hair of the young man. "Then become happy, dearest, noblest Sir Count. Your fate, and that of your betrothed, lies in your own hand. Speak only one word: 'Good-bye, Luther'—and the gates of Fuers-tenau and the arms of Margareta are open to you at once."

Count Philip wrung his hands and smote upon his forehead. He sank upon a sofa as in despair and groaned: "I cannot do it! O God, Thou art my witness and knowest how I mean it—I *cannot*."

These last words sounded like a knell: and two great tears ran down the cheeks of the Vogt, who was not by nature susceptible of tender emotion. He

made another appeal to the Count and threw his whole soul into his words. Yet the Count remained silent. With an anguished look the Vogt fixed his eyes long on the apparently lifeless form lying there, and then turned slowly to the door; yet once again regretfully looking back: "Ah me! what an unblest messenger I am compelled to be! You could be happy; but you have not been willing."

Count Philip heard nothing more; for his consciousness had vanished.

When he revived from his swoon, his ear caught from below the tramp of a horse. It was the departing Vogt of Fuerstenau, behind whom even then the drawbridge was closing. Philip hurriedly opened the window and called after him, but it was too late.

Then his eyes turned from the distant view upward, and he betook himself to Him who has a heart for all human distress, and whose counsel fully reveals itself only when the counsel of man can do nothing more. He stood long at the open window and prayed; and the higher his soul arose above the earth, the lighter became his woe, the calmer his anguish; until in the nightly sky of his trouble arose gently and silently one peaceful star—the star of Hope.

CHAPTER XII.

A CRUSHED AND TORN HEART.

“**W**HAT kind of news do you bring, my dear Faeustlin?” asked Count Erbach in the rack of suspense and eager expectation, as the returned Vogt entered his room.

“There has been a sharp and severe conflict, my lord,” replied the old man; “and I was not able to refrain from tears when I saw the young man’s distress.”

“Out with it at once, Faeustlin; what was his decision?” urged the Count impatiently.

The Vogt bent his head toward the earth and said: “This was the import of his reply—‘My heart is breaking within me. My conscience, however, has the superior right. I cannot.’ This was his last word.”

The Count stamped the floor with his foot wildly, and clenched his hands convulsively. He had not expected this conclusion. After the letter was sent

to Philip, he was himself frightened, and a change came over him. His anger was aroused against the priest by whom he had been goaded on to the measure. Yet he had quieted himself again in the hope that the letter would bring about the change in Philip at which he aimed. Now it had turned out so differently, the Count shook with rage and displeasure. "The madman!" he cried in a fierce voice, and struck a thundering blow on the table. Then he remained silent and sank into a gloomy brooding.

"Does she know it yet?" he asked after a considerable time, without looking at the Vogt.

"Yes, my lord," answered the latter in a grave tone. "Her eyes were the first that spied me at a distance. Sir Count, what will be the end of this? I foresee a great sorrow gathering like a dark cloud upon the castle hill."

"I could not do otherwise," cried the Count, working himself into a certain feeling of obstinate determination. "I have acted in the fear of God, and the hand of God will be with me. He forsakes not those who fear Him and contend for His honor. I should have made myself guilty of heresy, if I had given my child in marriage to a heretic. Margareta will compose herself and acquiesce in the inevitable; and after the first storm of grief has subsided, will find that her father has acted wisely. Besides, what happiness could bloom for her at the side of an unbe-

liever and apostate? But I will be the first to comfort her and hereafter always speak kindly with her. Where is she?"

"In the Kemnate, sitting with her gracious ladyship, your wife."

The Count extended his hand to the Vogt. "Accept my warmest thanks, my dear and faithful man," he said in a voice softening with emotion, and then disappeared through the door, leaving the Vogt to his gloomy and oppressive thoughts.

Arrived at the Kemnate, he laid his hand upon the door-bolt; but a shiver came over him and he dared not open it; for loud and piteous moans of sorrow reached his ear from the Kemnate, and he distinctly perceived the words of his child: "Ye mountains, fall upon me; ye hills, cover me! What can life be to me now? Look here, my precious mother! Where my heart was, is an empty and desolate place. The heart is gone. I feel the blood creep dull and weary in my veins; and my head, my poor head, O woe! my senses are about to vanish! Philip, was that your final word, 'I cannot?' Then it is my death-knell—and alas, yours too. I feel it, I know it, that your heart also is broken, that your life, too, will slowly wither away. You could not have spoken otherwise. You are a man. You are a hero, who bravely makes the heart with its love an offering to his conscience. Grandly do

you stand before me, as a saint; as a saint, O as a saint will I always think of you, and pray God to give me strength to become like you. For deep, deep do I feel the chasm between me and you. You are so great and I so small; my heart creeps in the dust like a worm, and can never rise upward."

The Countess made some reply, which the Count could not understand; and after it he perceived again his daughter's voice: "Ah, mother, dear to my heart, how tenderly I feel myself pillowed in your love. What a solace to the hunted roe to find on your heart a place of rest and a real understanding of its distress. I have no one to whom I could confide my suffering, or who could be my comforter, no one but you alone."

Now the Count pressed the fastening with decision and energy, and the door sprang open. "What do you say, my child?" he asked on entering, in a subdued tone and with a forced smile. "Have you not also a father, who could comfort you and quiet your heart?"

Terror-stricken and deathly pale, the two women knew not whither to turn their eyes. Margareta's fingers grasped convulsively at her waist, and the Countess made an attempt to rise from her seat, but sank back again motionless.

A long silence ensued. The Count felt a strange oppressiveness about his heart; the sight of his child's

pale cheeks and eyes red and swollen with weeping caused him a pang of regret; and yet he felt as it were a sense of injury at her silence. At last he said: "Have you no answer to your father's consoling word, Margaretta? To be sure you are yet a child. You know not a man's thought. You understand not how I brought about such a separation only in true fatherly care for my child. Listen to me, Margaretta! In lamentable blindness has this Philip misconstrued my purpose. I aimed to rescue him from the bonds of error, by making him see with alarm the consequences thereof. He ought to have acknowledged and repented of the mischief he had done with his unbelief. Certainly it was my confident hope and expectation, that he would come and fall penitently at my feet, saying: 'Father, I have sinned and fallen into error—I repent and solicit for the second time, from your hand, my bride.' But what does the ill-starred fellow do? He disdains the hand which beckons to him for his safety, and sacrifices to his wilful and stubborn delusion the being whom he pretended to love. From this you can perceive that his love never had a deep root in his heart. Do not grieve, therefore, too sorely for the loss of him. A man, who, in the headlong folly of youth, and disregarding the cautions of experienced men, rushes after a heretic and now to this heretic sacrifices his betrothed, is not worthy of you."

With a profound shudder Margaretta veiling her face turned away from such pitiless condolence, which rankled like a sharp dagger in her wounded heart. The Countess, however, rose with a forced composure and said: "My husband, everything has its time, even consolation. A premature attempt to comfort is powerless, and may wound rather than heal. But I could never have expected that you would have approached your child as a comforter."

The Count had come with the best intention. He had actually hoped for a reconciliation with Philip, had wished by threatening him with the loss of his bride to impel him to a breach with Luther; and now the opposite decision of Philip and the heart-woe of his child, fell heavily upon his soul and pressed him to comfort her with good and mild words. When, however, he saw that his good intention was so little understood and appreciated, when the response was reproach and secret complaint; the former bitterness came back into his soul, and in an altered tone he rebuked his wife: "I was not talking to you, Maria. You would have acted more discreetly if you had now kept silence, and not interfered between a father and his daughter, sowing distrust between those who would soon have understood each other and found themselves in harmony. But this has always been a mother's way in the world, to allow herself to be fooled by the smooth words of a suitor

and only to get her eyes open when she finds her daughter weeping in an ill-advised marriage.' To you, however, my child, I say this: You think hard of your father now, as though he had, with a rude hand, destroyed your happiness for life, whereas it is really another who is responsible for the wicked deed. But a day will come when you will kiss this apparently hard hand and say: 'I thank you, my father, you have done well for me?'" Thereupon he turned quickly about and left the Kemnate.

"Will it ever come to such a pass that I shall say so?" inquired Margaretta with a bitter smile.

"Mother, darling mother, I can never reconcile myself to the thought of being obliged to separate from Philip without having once more seen him and heard his voice. Ah! must I then separate from him without a farewell?"

The Countess drew her daughter tenderly to her breast. "My child, if there has to be a separation, it is by far the best that Philip should be at a distance. For the melancholy hour of a last farewell awakens new pain and sorrow. This is the only thing in which your father's judgment seems to me wise."

"But would it be wrong, then, if I should see him once more?" asked Margaretta eagerly.

The Countess shook her head doubtfully, and, evading the question, answered: "Do not think of

it; why would you, by your own wilful doing, increase your wretchedness?"

Margaretta's arms fell motionless and powerless by the side of her body, and her eyelids sank weary and heavy. After a brief silence she said: "From the lips of a third person only do I know Philip's answer; and who knows whether the messenger brought a true and faithful report? I should be calmer if I had his own meaning from his own lips."

"But to what purpose do you torment yourself with a wish which can never be fulfilled?" inquired the mother, still seeking to turn her thoughts. "For, as you know, when your father has once resolved, no power on earth can move him from it."

Margaretta arose and clung to her mother's arm: "Mother of my heart, if Philip should now enter the door here and say to you: 'Lady Countess, let me take my final adieu of my darling Margaretta,' would you hinder him and turn him away from you? O tell me, would you do that?"

The Countess, more and more astonished, beheld her daughter with a mournful smile, in whose eyes glowed an uneasy fire. "Never would I be so hard and unmerciful," she answered slowly. "Indeed I would encounter father's anger and say: 'Leave him in peace, and grant him the last painful satisfaction.' But abandon, my child, I beg you, the vain fancy."

Margaretta fell upon her mother's neck with passionate warmth: "You are my dearest and best mother."

The Countess indulged the vehement caresses of her daughter, without understanding them, however. At last she said: "Our souls are full of grief and sorrow which cannot be expressed in words. But there is One who comforts all mourners if they seek in Him a refuge. Our only hope is in God, who knows how to make all good which men have thought to make evil. Margaretta, my darling child, have we loved Him truly from the heart? Ah, let our souls evermore fervently burn with His love, so shall we draw nearer to Him; and the nearer we are brought to Him, the more heavenly will be our temper and the deeper will be the consolation of our hearts."

CHAPTER XIII.

BLIND ZEAL.

THE landlord of the Hotel of the Green Pine in Speck, the small grove already mentioned near Wittenberg, had his room full of guests. They were grouped about a rickety table covered with rudely carved inscriptions, calling lustily for the foaming cuckoo, and keeping up a great uproar and confusion. It was a motley and animated picture; for the greater part of the carousers were students, whose apparel at that time displayed all colors and was of the most diversified cut. Some wore, in all its splendor, the dress of a nobleman: a slashed doublet, a Spanish mantle about the shoulders, close fitting pantaloons with puffs about the hips, and small Spanish boots, on the head a fancy cap and feather, and at the side a slim sword. Others appeared in a costume repudiated by strict puritans as an invention of the devil, with a short cut, insufficient coat, and trowsers enormously full and

ugly to look at. Others, still, swaggered in military attire, with huge clacking jackboots, leather breeches, breastplate and cuirassier's sword on the baldric. The rest, however, presented themselves in the appropriate and customary student garb, that is, in a mantle reaching down to the knees, with ornamented border and with outstanding sleeves, a broad-brimmed slouch-hat cocked on one side, and brown or violet stockings in neatly fitting shoes and reaching up to the knees. Among these sons of the Muses, was here and there seen the square-built figure of a citizen from the artisan class, like a cuckoo among hedge sparrows.

We observe also in the crowd our old acquaintance, the master turner, Tobias Trautwein. He has just now entered, with a very red face; and all eyes are fastened upon him, as he begins with a roaring voice: "May the devil take me—it is a mad freak! Yesterday a bookseller arrived in the city from Halle, in the interest of Tetzels. His errand was to circulate the opposing theses of the inquisitor in these parts, in order to counterwork and mortify Luther. He soon got rid of his wares, like a baker of his fresh cakes. But—the devil take me—what was the upshot of the matter? He happened on the wrong customers: the students, who are adherents of Luther, have got possession of them—eight hundred copies, and what do they mean to do with them?

Hear it, gentlemen; they are going to burn them in the market-place !”

A violent uproar took place among the guests. Many voices screamed at once in such confusion that no one could hear his own words. At last an old, grayheaded student, who had sprung upon the table, made his voice, which resembled a lion's roar, heard through the din. “Comrades ! the fire must not take place ! Luther must not have a satisfaction of this kind; and Wittenberg is not to experience such an insult. Whoever has courage, comrades, let him help, that the bonfire may be prevented.”

“Ha, ha !” cried Tobias with a shrill and bitter laugh of derision; “you may as well let such a thing alone, you fire-eaters. How many are there of you ? A mere handful, as you see; but those who adhere to Luther become daily more numerous, so that a right-minded man might well feel sick at heart. In fact, since the day those execrable theses went into circulation, it is like a migration of nations to Wittenberg. You, gentlemen, could do nothing against such a swarm, and would have to creep into a mousehole.”

A furious outcry arose after these words; and with fearful curses Luther was anathematized by this Korah rabble, as in fact he had long been already.

The landlord filled the mugs again, and some one asked where the bonfire was to be kindled. Just then

the door was suddenly opened, and a young student out of breath screamed into the room: "There you are sitting and quenching your thirst, while in the market-place there is a much fitter opportunity to extinguish something. When I came by the place an hour ago, everything was quiet. The devil must have been abroad; for now the bonfire is actually burning, and a dense crowd is singing satirical songs about Tetzal which are shocking to hear."

The rabble sprang, as if possessed, from the seats, and rushed in wild commotion out through the door toward the market-place, from whence the wind was bearing away dark volumes of smoke and shrill blasts of the trumpet. With a cry of rage they attempted to force their way into the dense multitude. But the effort of the few was powerless; and gnashing their teeth with rage and venting new maledictions, they shortly dispersed in every direction. Only the old graybeard attempted by force to begin an affray; but he was soon overpowered, and with a torn coat and bloody face, beat a retreat.

It was, in fact, just as master Tobias reported. The students who adhered to Luther had bought up from a bookseller eight hundred copies of Tetzal's theses; and by burning the same had performed an act of retaliation upon the vender of indulgences. In a mad frolic, the young people, fantastically marked, had held a mock trial, and in the exuberance of their

fun had overpassed the limits of propriety by a ludicrous imitation of holy offices; and while stirring up the burning paper they chanted in the nasal voice of the monks the Church hymn for the repose of the dead: *Requiem aeternam da iis, Domine!* (Give to them, O Lord, eternal rest.) Just then appeared on this scene a monk's form in the garb of a Dominican friar, with a scroll on the breast bearing the label: "Johannes Tetzel." The same in holy indignation was about to administer a sharp rebuke for the act of burning the theses, when Beelzebub, with horse-tail, and red cockfeather, rushed in, followed by a troop of little devils in hideous costume, armed with spits and oven-forks, who danced and yelled around Tetzel and suddenly, at the command of Beelzebub, thrust him away from them with their forks.

The citizens had looked on this masquerade with evident sympathy. Not a single monk was to be seen in the street.

In the quiet garden of the monastery, aloof from the ferment of the city, Martin Luther was standing and watching with delight the sparrows and tom-tits, to which he threw crumbs of bread from a tray. The garden was quite indispensable to him. It was to him a delightful recreation when he rambled at noon under the trees, and amused himself with the flowers which bloomed under his fostering hand. For he tended

them as gently as a mother does her child and surpassed the best gardener in delicacy and skill. This man, in whose mind were maturing vast world-moving ideas, whose eye took in the whole of Christendom in its survey, whose inquiring mind was absorbed in the Book of books, and whose strength was consumed in the defence of the Gospel, could pass hours together in his quiet little garden and forget everything over the small rose which bloomed at his feet or a vine-branch which smiled upon him with golden fruit. The little birds all knew him well; for when the winter came and pinching want set in, they knew where to find their daily bread. They had not the least fear of the man in the black cowl, who was so good to them; they hopped quite near to him and prattled with him in their language which the learned man seemed to understand; for he answered them, and entertained himself with them, in a way which it was delightful to see.

On this day the Doctor every now and then looked up and listened, when the wind brought him a sound from the market-place. But he gave attention only for a moment, and abandoned himself again like a child to the enjoyment of his feathered friends.

Suddenly a stern voice startled him. "There you stand now, Martinus, in unprofitable trifling, and pay no attention to the grave things which are this moment taking place."

It was the Professor Andreas Bodenstein of Carlstadt, Luther's colleague and friend, who had hurried into the garden in an excited state of mind.

"What grave things?" inquired Luther eagerly. "Was that, perhaps, the noise which occasionally reached my ear?"

"Certainly," continued Bodenstein with warmth; "your friends have been active while you are idle, and have contrived a bitter retaliation for the fellow Tetzels. Of the theses which the vender of indulgences published against you, eight hundred have already been burned in the market-place. Ah, that was a lusty fire, and a jubilation of the people which made my heart leap in my body. I did at first regret that you began the contest, thinking that you would stand alone, and probably fall into the trap of the Inquisitor. But now I see that your cause prospers; for the number of those who adhere to you increases daily. Pray, rejoice then also, Martinus; for this fire concerns you more than any one else, and was kindled expressly for your honor and delight."

Luther's countenance became more and more troubled. His eyes retreated behind his sinking eyebrows, his lips were gloomily compressed, and his arms extended as in deprecation to the speaker. "Do you think to give me joy by such a message? Do you not know me well enough, Andreas, to feel

that such news must give me deepest pain? Not with such weapons will I contend, for they are fleshly weapons. I have another sword, which is the word of God, and which is more powerful than flames of fire. My young friends, no doubt, meant well toward me. But they have acted with a blind zeal; and I cannot thank them for it, inasmuch as such a procedure brings only a scandal upon the good cause. For now a reproach is put into the mouth of the enemy. 'This man pretends to fight only with the weapons of the Spirit; but look how much of the flesh is in him.'"

Bodenstein's face became grave; and, in a state of mingled embarrassment and vexation, he stammered out something scarcely intelligible, soon left the garden and returned home with conflicting feelings.

Scarcely had Luther returned to his cell, when there was a knock, and in the door appeared a young student with an agreeable face and an open, frank expression of countenance. He greeted the Doctor respectfully, and said: "My name is Johannes Knipstrow and I am a student belonging to the order of the Franciscans and devoted to learning at Frankfort. I have been here in Wittenberg a few days, and attended your lectures, that I might see and hear for myself the man whose words had touched my heart and showed to me the way of

truth. At Frankfort I have sat with a few friends over your books and diligently studied them, I have also searched the Scriptures whether these things were so, as you teach; and in this inquiry it has become more and more evident to me that you are altogether right.

“The man Tetzels, who at present gains everywhere contempt and ridicule instead of cash, is preparing to maintain in debate his theses against yours, in order to obtain a Doctor’s degree. I have, therefore, a project which has been maturing in my mind and allows me no rest day or night. When I think of my youth this purpose frightens me, as an audacious venture; but a zeal for the Lord consumes me and I cannot banish it from my thoughts. I have on that account come to Wittenberg, to inquire of you, reverend father, whether you could say yea and amen to my design. One thing, however,” he proceeded with some difficulty and hesitation,—“one thing I would like previously to inquire—whether the riot which has just taken place in the market square of this city occurred with your consent or at your bidding?”

Luther shook his head sorrowfully. “The report of it has just now reached me, and my soul is pained at such an impropriety, which runs strongly against every thought and feeling of mine. I shall this day bear my testimony against it at vespers.”

The student breathed more freely. "Forgive me, reverend Doctor, that I should wrong you with a question implying such distrust. My heart said to me in advance, that you could have had no part or satisfaction in such a proceeding; for the weapons with which you contend are more noble."

"But tell me now, I pray," said Luther interrupting the young man somewhat impatiently, "what is the purpose which agitates your mind?"

A new blush of embarrassment covered the cheeks of the young man, and he replied with some deliberation: "I have read the theses of Tetzel. Such things ought not to remain unanswered, lest the man suppose he has silenced his opponent and won a victory. You, however, very reverend Doctor, should not soil your fingers with the putrid thing. It would also be an unequal contest, as between a valiant knight and a robber behind the hedge. Tetzel's propositions are so weak and vulnerable that it does not require your intellectual force to vanquish him. I would, therefore, most respectfully ask—whether you—will give—me permission—to—debate with Tetzel?"

Luther's powerful eyes opened wide and measured with searching gaze the youthful figure, on whose cheeks glowed a hallowed fire more and more beautiful and whose whole nature had something uncommonly attractive; a smile of fatherly good-will spread

over the Doctor's lips. "You are a bold fellow," said he, playfully patting the young man's shoulders. "How many years do you number?"

"One and twenty," was the answer of the youth, whose courage grew apace under Luther's kindly manner. "I beg you, count not my years, Sir Doctor; try me rather according to my knowledge and ability, if you have leisure and patience to do so."

"Very well, then, my young friend, sit right down," was the cordial invitation of Luther, "and let me see whether your little armory is full of right good weapons."

The two men now plunged into a theological conference which lasted two full hours. Then Luther arose and laid his hand on the young man's head: "Go forward, my very dear young friend; you will accomplish it, and the grace of God be with you."

CHAPTER XIV.

ONE BLOW AFTER ANOTHER.

THE Friday after the festival of St. Anthony, January 22d, 1518, was a sunbright winter day. A robe of pure white snow lay on the ground. Under a high vaulted ceiling in the hall of the University of Frankfort on the Oder, a large and brilliant assembly was gathered. Three hundred monks, besides many of the nobles and principal citizens were present. The object in view was a Doctor's promotion, and that not an ordinary one either; for the widely known Dominican Prior and Apostolical Inquisitor, Johannes Tetzel, whose name was on many lips, proposed to maintain his theses against Doctor Martin Luther.

Majestically raised on a lofty chair, in a red velvet mantle and with a golden sceptre, sat Dr. Conrad Wimpina, the Rector of the University. All knew that he was in sympathy with Tetzel, and some even

claimed to know that he had himself drawn up the theses, inasmuch as Tetzels was not capable of such an intellectual effort.

The portly and massive form of the Rector now rose with a good deal of bustle, and when a profound silence ensued, he said: "This grave and highly respectable assembly will please give attention to the two and twenty propositions which the Brother Johannes Tetzel, Apostolical Inquisitor, proposes publicly to defend in the High School of Frankfort, From these it will soon appear, at the first glance, who is to be considered a heretic, apostate, babbler, and blasphemer."

In still deeper silence the theses of Tetzel were now read aloud, and afterward those present were called upon to speak, if any one had aught to object.

A long silence ensued, and then a low whisper. At length a young monk made his way with difficulty to the rostrum, and his voice rang through the assembly: "Since, as it appears, no one of the older and more learned gentlemen is willing to speak, I will venture to attack the theses which have just been heard, from the first one to the last, inasmuch as they rest all on a foundation so insecure that it is a small thing to overthrow them."

A murmur of surprise and dissatisfaction ran through the hall. The Rector darted a withering look of dig-

nified contempt at the young man, while Tetzel's imploring eyes sought the Rector as though he would say: "Come to my rescue; I am in woe and anguish."

The young man now began to speak, at first with some embarrassment and in a subdued voice; yet soon with such a flow of eloquence and force of demonstration that all eyes were fastened more and more intently upon the bold debater. On all sides the question was asked: "Who is this man?" and the answer was: "He is one of the Franciscans, his name is Johannes Knipstrow; he has a keen intellect and he has studied so thoroughly, that Tetzel may find some trouble with him."

So it turned out in fact. Tetzel became confused, was first pale, then red, and it was quite evident that he was better fitted for a mountebank and cutpurse than a debater, and that a fool's cap was more suitable for him than a doctor's hat.

Here and there a suppressed titter was audible, which put poor Tetzel in a profuse perspiration; while others again, especially the Dominicans, clenched their fists in anger and vexation. At length the tumult was such that only with great difficulty the Rector succeeded in commanding silence. Finally, as Tetzel got himself into a more and more pitiable condition, the Rector himself was obliged to enter the lists and undertake the defence of the theses, in which, however, he succeeded so badly that he closed the

debate in an extreme disgust, as he was not able to cope with the young Franciscan.

Tetzel, in a most wretched plight and humor, stole away from the scene like a half drowned dog, and heartily wished that he had kept his fingers out of the business. He found some comfort, however, in his despondency from the fact that, after all, his Doctor's hat would be secure, as it was necessary, in any case, as a slight to Luther. Yet on the street the boys sang:

Ye who cannot say your say,
From debating keep away.

Amid loud cheers was young Knipstrow received and borne in a sort of triumphal procession to his lodging, where he was served with a goblet of red wine and cheered with many words of encouragement.

As late in the evening he was sitting alone in his little room and thinking over the great event, two unknown persons in disguise entered suddenly, and in a threatening tone commanded him to follow them; and, when he refused to do so, laid hold of him by the arms and led him forcibly down the stairs. In the street below was standing a carriage to which two horses were harnessed, into which they forced him, despite resistance, and, as he cried for help, they thrust a cloth into his mouth and drove away in the darkness. Whither?—that they did not tell

him. But after a few days he found out what this nightly adventure meant. In the prison of a remote Pomeranian convent he was to repent his victory over Luther's opponent.

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At Wittenberg there was great exultation when the news came that Tetzel had been shamefully worsted in debate at Frankfort. Even Luther heard it with pleasure and inquired with much interest about the young debater, whom he would gladly have attracted to Wittenberg, in order to have him with himself. Yet no one could give any information where the youth was staying or what had become of him.

Luther found, indeed, little time for instituting further inquiries; for in the meantime he was obliged to sharpen his own sword for the conflict. A more dangerous adversary now took the field against him.

Hitherto he had cherished a secret hope that the Pope would form a right judgment and not shut his own eyes to the truth. But now came to him from Rome, issuing from the Pontifical palace, a stone flying at his head, in the form of a document which the Pope himself had caused to be drawn up by one of his highest officials, the palace minister, Sylvester Prierias.

Luther was alarmed at this document bearing

the Papal seal. It began in a tone of arrogant superiority, and treated the Wittenberg professor as an immature schoolboy. The palace minister seemed to regard the victory as already in his own hand, for, in the consciousness of superiority, he declared that he would merely ascertain whether Martinus had a nose of iron and a head of brass. He used no title of respect whatever or fragrant word of compliment to the German monk, but called him in scorn a leper whose skin changed from one color to another. Among other things he said, that since biting is a property of dogs, Luther very probably had a dog for his father, inasmuch as he seemed born for biting. If, however, the Pope had given him a fat bishopric and made him Commissioner of Indulgences, he would probably have had a sweeter voice and piped in a different tone about indulgences.

“Now the real work begins,” exclaimed Luther earnestly, when he read these words and remembered that the Pope was behind them. He laid the document down and sank into a long and silent meditation, interrupted by occasional sighs which betrayed the anguish of his heart. He recalled the warnings of his friends, who had followed his steps with anxious look and foreboded no good for him. Again he seized and read the document, and the further he went the more his eyes brightened, the more cheerful and buoyant his mind became;

and, when he finally put the bungling performance out of his hand, he could hardly refrain from laughter. "What an able advocate and clever attorney the Pope has chosen for himself! Verily, if I had not known that Herr Sylvester Prierias has gray hair, I might have taken him for a boy that had scarcely broken the shell."

It became too narrow for him in the cell. He drew the cowl over his head, for without it was fiercely cold, and went at a hurried step to his friend Nicolaus Amsdorf. He, too, laughed when he read the document. "It seems to me," he remarked, "as if this pamphlet had not been composed by Sylvester himself, but by some scamp who palmed off this scurrilous production on the palace minister of the Holy Father only to ridicule him, as the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum* lately did with the monks. In my opinion, therefore, it is not at all necessary to make any reply to it."

Luther himself was at first inclined to entertain this supposition. But after it became certain, that Sylvester Prierias did actually, and in real earnest, issue this paper, Luther reviewed it with a right good will, and gave the poor Prierias such an unmerciful mauling, as to leave scarcely a sound spot on his body. He caused the document of Prierias to be printed word for word and set in the margin as a border around it his own criticisms. It was

thereby demolished in the eyes of the world, and Sylvester's glory turned to shame.

When the Pope received intelligence of this, he carried himself towards his palace minister very ungraciously, and said that he had expected better things of him.

Luther's name, however, acquired daily a clearer and fuller ring, and his cause a broader and firmer foundation. Yet in the same proportion also increased the violence of his enemies. In pulpits innumerable, and in the most fanatical expressions of animosity, were heard denunciations against the Wittenberg heretic, arch-heretic, antichrist, madman, demoniac, arch-villain, seducer, prophet of the devil, and apostle of hell. It seemed as if his victories were to cost Doctor Martinus dear; and the fate of poor Knipstrow, of which he now learned, as also the sorrow of his friends, must have made him timid if he had not been Luther—yes, exactly Luther.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ANGEL OF CONSOLATION.

THE sky is blue, the air is still, the snow is frozen hard, and the atmosphere is clear and bracing. In short, the day is precisely one on which the huntsman goes to his business with the greatest alacrity and delight.

In the Castle Court at Fuerstenau, the attendants are sitting on horseback and restraining with difficulty the dogs, who pull wildly at the tether and wait impatiently for the start. The Count allows them to wait long for him; so that it becomes tedious to the men and expressions of dissatisfaction are dropped. Formerly the Count was very different, a model of punctuality and the lover of order. Now he is so variable and impetuous that one never knows how to please him.

At last he appears on the steps in leather jacket, and the train puts itself in motion. Soon the tract is reached which is to be beaten up in to-day's hunt.

The horns give a signal, the dogs open, and the hunt begins.

It is not long before there follows a second blast of the horn. It is an order to let loose the pack, for a trace of the noble game is discovered. With shouts of men and the yelp of dogs, the train dashes away like a whirlwind, and the twigs and branches of the underbrush snap and crackle under the horses' feet. The panting stag, a noble fellow of fourteen points, is fleet of foot and has a wide start. He baffles his pursuers by zig-zag turns, and the chase becomes more and more animated. The Count especially spurs excitedly his hunting charger, his eyes flame, and his cheeks glow with the fire of passion.

Now the stag makes a new move. By a sudden turn he makes for the highway which winds obliquely through the forest. He makes a prodigious leap, and is clear over the ditch. On come the hunters also quickly. The horses hesitate and prance, for the ditch is broad; but a thundering call of the Count resounds, and with a madly daring leap the whole troop is across on the highway.

Just at that moment, two obscure peasants are coming along the road driving a calf before them. The foremost of the riders shout to them to turn out; and one of them, a young and active person, quickly darts aside. But the other, an old man, weak and slow in his limbs, is not able to seek shelter.

He and the little calf together sink beneath the hoofs of the horses; and without a pause the chase sweeps onward.

Pale with terror and trembling in his whole frame, the youth rushes to the spot and bends over the old man. "Father! Father!" he cries in mortal fright, shaking the prostrate old man. "Father! open your eyes!"

The old man does not move.

Then the youth started up in wild and frantic anguish, and clenched fiercely his hands in speechless rage after the vanishing huntsmen.

From the neck of the little calf which had been crushed to the ground spurted a stream of blood. It gave only one piteous groan and expired. The young peasant heard it not. He stood there like one dazed, gazing vacantly into the empty space, with lips compressed, a mute and dismal picture of excited terror.

After a while, regaining his self-possession, he turned to his father lying on the ground, grasped him with a strong arm, and bore him wearily away.

Half an hour later, bathed in perspiration, he reached the village and his lowly hut. In the door he was met by an old woman, who gazed with profound alarm on her returning son, and at the sight of the lifeless body gave utterance to a piteous cry of grief.

"Yea, wail, mother, if you still have tears!"

screamed the son wildly. "But I will run abroad into the land and cry: woe!"

He laid his father on the bed, unfastened his jacket, and examined his body, on which appeared five wounds, no one of which, happily, was mortal. The son bade the mother prepare a hot drink, which he poured into the mouth of the unconscious man. He then washed his wounds with fresh water; and, after an hour, the breathing returned to the old man again. First of all, however, the son was obliged to tell him the particulars of what had happened; for his thoughts were confused and, as it were, beclouded.

It was soon rumored throughout the village what had happened, and the room was filled with peasants, who gave vent to violent and irritating words, and talked long with Andreas, the injured man's son. When some left, others came; and till late in the afternoon the exhausted man did not find an hour of repose.

From the Castle descended a damsel, with a basket on her arm, and directed her steps towards the village where this accident had happened. Every day she was seen to come down from the hill and to visit the hamlets round about Fuerstenau; and wherever she appeared, the poor, and needy, and suffering, greeted her with tears of thankfulness.

She entered a hut at the very beginning of the

village street, in which a young married woman was lying in a fever. The patient was in a slumber, with her pale hands folded on her breast. On the floor sat a child about two years of age gnawing on a turnip. Everything in the dreary and untidy room was in confusion, and the air of it was close and stifling. The young lady took the child from the floor and cleansed it from the filth; she then swept the floor and put the room in order. As she was just in the act of placing the contents of her basket upon the table, the door opened and the husband of the sick woman entered. He stopped short and remained standing in the door surprised and embarrassed, forgetting even the salutation.

The young lady approached him kindly, and inquired tenderly about the state of the sick wife. The peasant answered in a manner so absent and wandering that it struck the young lady with surprise.

“What is the matter with you, David?”

The man seemed unwilling to speak; but, at the urgent request of the lady, he finally told her, in a hesitating way, what had happened to the old peasant Joseph the same morning.

The young lady listened with deepest emotion; and when David had finished the story, she took her leave in haste. “Good-bye, David, I will look after the poor man.”

As she drew near the cottage she heard a hum of

confused voices, which however at once ceased as she opened the door and stepped in. She observed, too, in the feelings of those present, a still greater constraint and perplexity than she had remarked in David. All gave way respectfully as she approached the bed and bent over the sick man with a look of tender sympathy and compassion; a deep stillness reigned in the narrow chamber; they listened motionless to the sweet, gentle, and touching words which the young lady spoke, and gazed upon the delicate, noble, pale face, in every feature of which beamed love and tenderness.

Ursula, the wife of the unfortunate man, was sitting behind the stove and weeping silently by herself; Andreas, the son, was standing by the door, his face flushed with shame, in painful constraint, fumbling mechanically with his hands the fur cap which he had taken off. The rest of the peasants, also, were extremely disconcerted, and hardly knew which way to turn their eyes. What they saw was to them like a supernatural apparition, as a judgment of God for their evil thoughts.

“I will come again to-morrow,” said the young lady, “and bring something to revive and strengthen you, my poor Jacob.” Thereupon she vanished noiselessly from the cottage.

It was apparent that all now breathed more freely; but they had not words to express what they felt.

At last the old Ursula behind the stove came forward and, with uplifted hands and earnest look, stood before the son Andreas. "Be heartily sorry, Andreas. Never do I want to see you clench your fist against the man whose daughter hovers like an angel of mercy over those who are groaning in want and misery."

"Yes, be ashamed and sorry," cried a voice from the bed of the sick man, who raised himself with difficulty and beckoned his son to him. "You too," he continued, addressing himself to the rest, "hold your tongues in silence, and cease to have hard thoughts of our Count. Separate yourselves from those who come from Franconia and Thuringia, sneaking stealthily through the villages and exciting the people to disobedience towards the knights and nobles. For never could the saints be with those who break the ordinance of God and set themselves against those whose bread they eat."

A low murmur of dissatisfaction was heard in the room.

"Be silent," resumed the old man indignantly. "I know your talk. It may be, perhaps, that this or that noble is a harsh man to his subjects, like Pharaoh to the children of Israel. Yet it would be a sin and folly if we should wish to rise up against our Count; for he is an upright, noble man. But even if *he* were *not*; ought we not be quiet and

willing to serve him in peace for his *daughter's* sake? Have you so quickly forgotten again all the good which the Countess Margaretta does, in all places, wherever distress cries to her? Therefore do you, too, repent, you men, and change your mind."

The peasants ventured not a word of reply, and left the cottage in silence.

From her childhood up, the most delightful walks of Margaretta had been when, as a good Samaritan, she could dry the tears, soothe the griefs, and heal the wounds of the distressed and suffering. What was it that now kindled in her noble heart a still warmer zeal in the practice of this virtue? Ah, in consolation which she imparted to others, she sought for herself a solace; in the love which she gave to the poor, she wished to find something to replace her own great loss, and healing for the open wounds of her own heart.*

* II Cor. i. 4.

CHAPTER XVI.

MEETING AGAIN.

COUNT Philip von Rieneck was sitting in the evening twilight by the fire, warming his chilled and stiffened limbs; for to-day he had taken a long ride through his dominions. Stout billets of oak snapped and crackled briskly in the fire, and the tongues of flame threw all manner of shadowy figures on the ceiling, like uneasy and silent spectres.

In a grave mood the Count watched the play of the flames, throwing now and then mechanically a billet into the fire. We scarcely recognize him again. The fiery glow of his cheeks is paled; the lustre of his eye is quenched; and a trace of lassitude appears on his once animated countenance. Philip looks like one who has done with the world. His life has to him no further meaning or aim; for the pole of his thought, and feeling, and effort is removed, and the fair edifice of hopes has fallen in ruins. He seeks consolation and indemnity in the fulfilment of his

duties as a ruler; and his subjects all revere him as an upright and clement lord, and love him from the heart well nigh more than a father. But all this love and reverence of his subjects, however grateful to his feelings, could not heal the wounds which fate had inflicted on him, could not satisfy the want which the loss of the dearest of all beings caused. His only consolation was night and the Word of God. In the night his loved one, regardless of the father's prohibition, came to him in dreams. Then was she his own; then he saw her face and heard her voice; and then she swore to him love and fidelity until death. By day he searched much the Holy Scriptures and the writings of Luther; and from the precious Word of God he derived a conscious power to bear his sorrow, so that it was not too heavy and his soul became ever more submissive to the Lord.

Near him, stretched on the floor, lay Ralf, the large silver-gray bulldog, the faithful beast, which did not stir from his side. It seemed as if this creature felt that its master was now altogether alone, and crouched near him all the time, and looked at him frequently with his large eyes exactly as if he said: "Though all forsake thee, I will stay with thee."

The door opened, and Jonathan, the old servant, made the announcement: "A traveller is waiting

below in the hall, and desires to speak with you, my gracious Master."

"Have a warm bowl of porridge made for him and let him have a place by the fire," answered the Count without looking up.

"It has been already done, gracious Sir," rejoined Jonathan, "but the man insists upon it that he must see you in person, and speak with you; for he bears with him a weighty matter for you, which he dares not deliver to any other."

Philip turned himself toward the door. "Weighty matter for me? Then he may come in."

Whereupon there appeared a man in poor clothing and slender body, who bowed politely at the door and, at a motion from the Count, approached nearer.

"Whence come you, stranger?"

"Directly from Fuerstenau, Sir."

The Count rose quickly from his seat, and fixed his eyes intently and inquiringly upon the stranger. "Did any one send you to me with a commission, that you desire to see me in person?"

The traveller silently nodded assent and fingered on his jacket, while the Count's pulse beat quicker and quicker. The man searched with his fingers even to the bare skin, whence he drew forth a small wallet of kid leather and handed it to the Count. "I had to conceal this in a secure place," he said, "for something of great value seems to be kept in it, if

I may judge by the good messenger's pay which the gracious lady gave me. An excellent, beautiful damsel, Sir; but so pale. She must surely have some great sorrow upon her heart."

Philip had meanwhile possessed himself of the wallet, and occupied himself with getting at the contents. At last he drew out a letter, and with difficulty repressed his tears when he saw upon it Margareta's handwriting. "Please go down again into the hall," he said to the messenger, "and warm yourself thoroughly. But, here, take from me four gold pieces which I happen to have in my pocket, and God preserve you."

The traveller, overcome with delight, bent his knee and wished to express his thanks; but the Count did not suffer it and hurried the happy fellow out at the door.

Now Philip breathed more freely, and his lips whispered as if in prayer.

It had become quite dim in the room, and by the flickering light of the chimney-fire he could scarcely distinguish the letters; besides his eyes swam and his hands trembled violently. But to light a taper, was more than his eagerness allowed him to do. He bent himself down to the fire and read, and repeatedly raised the paper to his lips, while a thrill as of fire ran through his veins.

O how happy he was! how blessed! To be sure

he had not the loved one herself; but he now had, nevertheless, the paper which her fingers had touched and her tears moistened. Soon his tears joined themselves to hers—oh, it must surely be something troublesome that she wrote on the second page.

More than once he paused. He could not finish the reading at one breath: the storm within must first in some measure subside. When at last he had brought the reading of the letter to a conclusion, he relapsed again into his former dreamy brooding and sighs. It had now become entirely dark, and the servant entered bringing a lighted candle. He started up alarmed, gazed intently at the man who had entered, and drew him to a seat, saying: "Sit down here by me, Jonathan, I have something to say to you. But first shove the bolt of the door." The two sat long together, until the candle had quite burned down.

When old Jonathan laid himself down to rest that night, after saying his rosary through he added to it a prayer for his Master right out of his own heart. "O St. Ignatius help! and let no harm befall him; and the first time I see him laugh heartily, I vow to place on your altar two large wax candles."

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It was the end of February. The winter still drove mercilessly its sport with the stiffened earth. The plain lay buried deep in snow; the trees groaned

under the weight; many a little bird found no longer its daily bread and fell dead from the bough; even the wild game of the forest sought help of men, from whose approach at other times it fled. Moreover, it was bitter cold, so that the snow crackled under the feet like fragments of glass.

The sun was about going down when a monk dragged himself painfully up the height to Castle Fuerstenau, often slipping backward on the smooth path, and pausing from time to time in order to wipe the moisture from his brow. Having reached the other enclosing wall equipped with numerous small watch-towers, he called to the sentinel at the gate and humbly begged for entrance. A surly answer came back from the small, half-opened, grated window: "I will not freeze my fingers stiff for a beggar. Wait till the servants come home from the forest." Whereupon he shut the window again.

The monk sighed and rubbed his stiffened hands together. He tried also to keep himself warm by pacing backward and forward; for a cutting wind from the heights blew directly upon his heated temples. He drew his cowl down closer upon his face, and kept his watch upon the forest with a painful impatience. Fortunately he did not have to wait long before he heard voices, and soon the castle servants came up the heights.

At his request, the servants permitted the monk

to enter with them the Castle Court, without further troubling themselves about him. They turned towards the stables, while the friar made his way to the inner court. His eyes ran furtively along the window rows of the castle, which now glowed in the last feeble rays of the setting sun. Then he walked slowly and cautiously to the kitchen, from which he heard the chattering of the servant maids.

As he was about to ascend the stone steps he met the aged Daniel. The monk's face lighted up for a moment with something like an expression of joy. Still it was only for a moment; for immediately, with an inclination of his person, he uttered the customary salutation: "Glory be to Jesus Christ."

"World without end, Amen," responded Daniel, and went on to say: "You come late up the heights, my reverend friend."

"I wanted to beg for entertainment this night and also for refreshment," said the monk.

Daniel surveyed the friar with a keen eye, as if there was something striking about him; and then said: "Come in," at the same time with a motion of the hand directing him to the kitchen.

Glancing toward the women, the monk hesitated and looked embarrassed. "I am tired from long travelling: might I therefore humbly request for myself a quiet corner, for the curiosity of the maids is oppressive to me."

With a gentle shake of the head and a scrutiny of the monk's face, the old man opened the door of his own chamber and invited the stranger to a place on a wooden seat which ran along the wall, while he busied himself in kindling a taper. Then he called to the women to bring in some bread and beer. After this was done the monk shoved the cowl back so that his face was open to view.

Again the old man paused and fastened his gaze on these features which seemed to him so familiar. "What is your name?" he asked quickly.

"Brother Philippus," was the answer.

"Merciful God!" exclaimed Daniel, starting and clapping his hands together with amazement. "You deceive me no longer. The cowl is a poor disguise, for your speech betrays you. It is our Count Philip."

"Yes, that is who I am, Daniel," said the monk stepping up to the old man and grasping his hand; "and I have come to you for help, because I know your faithfulness. Or"—scanning doubtfully his face—"do you no longer love me? Have you also become my enemy?"

The old man was quite beside himself, and trembled from head to foot, so that he was not able to utter a word. He gazed by turns at the Count and at the door.

"I have caused you alarm and apprehension," said Philip with deep concern. "I am truly sorry for it.

But only compose yourself, my old friend; there will no trouble happen; for in this strange disguise no one will surely seek the Count of Rieneck."

Daniel tottered with unsteady knee to the door and slipped the wooden bolt. He then said: "But tell me, I pray, what does your presence here imply? In the sternest and most peremptory manner has the Count prohibited you from crossing his threshold. I must not shelter you longer, for by so doing I would break my pledge of fidelity and my conscience would upbraid me."

Philip drew the old man near to him on the bench and again pressed his rough, bony hand. "Daniel, why do you look at me with so much distrust and suspicion? Do you think that I would lead you into a breach of honor and trust? I think I see in you what you apprehend from me. You look upon me as a robber, aiming to carry off a daughter from her parents. Is it not so?"

Daniel nodded sorrowfully and buried his face in his two hands sobbing. "What else would you do, Sir Count? Would you go to the Count her father and demand his daughter? What then is the object of your monk's disguise?"

"Only calm yourself, I pray you," said Philip earnestly to the old man, "and listen to me. Never would I have forced myself over this forbidden threshold, if Count Erbach had granted me, what he ought

not to have refused, a last farewell of my Margaretta. For this alone have I made this stealthy entrance."

Daniel felt a sensible relief, and looked up at the Count with an expression of thankfulness. "O that is a good word, Sir Count; now the pressure upon my heart is removed. But still—why have you taken this dangerous step? Was it not really a kindness and well meant, that our master spared you the agony of leave-taking? Never could you after all have regained your bride thereby? To-day, also, if you see each other, what do you accomplish thereby except to add a new anguish to the old wound? Follow, therefore, gracious Sir, my advice, and withdraw from here. Besides, there might some further misfortune happen to you."

Philip made an uneasy movement. "So speaks a man who never loved a woman. Daniel, your counsel is cruel, and cuts me to the heart. I am so near to my loved one, and yet must I return home without accomplishing my object? Demand anything else from me, Daniel, but do not demand this. You must aid me, I will never let you off. You *will* aid me when you learn who it was that gave me the impulse to such a venture and awakened the resolution to make it: Margaretta herself! Yes, open your old eyes, Daniel, and look at this."

He drew forth Margaretta's letter and held it before the old man's eyes. "Do you know this

handwriting? After having long waited in vain for a favorable opportunity, she privately sent me this short letter by the hand of a traveller. In it she tells me of her distress, how she wrestled for submission to her fate without avail, because of her tormenting uncertainty as to the state of my feelings, and whether the Vogt had brought her a true and literal account. Also, the same had not told her a word concerning a point which was to her most important of all for her consolation, namely, whether my heart would remain steadfast and faithful to her as hers would to me. If she had received this word of consolation from my own lips, then would she be more at rest; and, in the strength of spiritual fellowship with her betrothed, bear submissively her fate, and also keep alive in her heart the hope that after all her sorrow would some time be turned to joy. For which reason she implores me in the most pressing terms to come to her secretly; and advises me to make the venture in the disguise of a monk. She concludes her letter in these words: 'Have compassion upon me, dearest Philip, I will discover by this whether your heart remains in eternal fidelity to me: if so, you will make this last sacrifice for me.' Now, Daniel, say—was I not obliged to come?"

The old man looked straight before him, with firmly compressed lips, and slowly nodded his head.

It was plainly to be read in his countenance, that he had a severe conflict in his mind, and wavered in painful doubt between two decisions. His affection strongly inclined him to the Count, softening his heart in pity. But the consciousness of deceiving his master, and the anguish of a possible discovery, placed, as it were, a bolt before his compassion. For a long time he found not a word; and Philip was obliged to resort anew to entreaties. "Daniel, if you are not willing to do it for my sake, then have compassion upon the young lady. You have learned what service it is in your power to do her. To you it is a small matter; to her it becomes a very great favor, for which she will never, never forget you. Two duties press upon you, at the same time and in different directions—obedience to a hard, unfeeling command, on the one hand; and administering a balm to a deadly wounded heart on the other. Which is greater, Daniel? ask your own conscience, which is the greater?"

The old man paced the floor of the room up and down, wringing his hands: "What ought I to do? Holy Mother of God, what shall I do?"

"What your heart commands you, and the love which sheweth mercy," cried Philip earnestly. "Love is the supreme command; love is the fulfilling of the whole law."

Tears burst from Daniel's eyes. "Who could withstand you, Sir Count? But I have a painful weight upon my heart lest some evil befall you."

"Never fear, my dear Daniel," said Philip quieting him. "You know, of course, a private way to the Kemnate where no one will overhear us. Yet go before and prepare Margaretta with the Countess, and see also whether the Count is not thereabouts."

With timorous step Daniel approached the door and shoved back the bolt. At the same instant he heard without a loud inquiry: "Where is Daniel?" The old man turned pale: he recognized the voice of Johannes Speckel, the confessor.

Quickly regaining his self-possession, he called in an undertone to the Count: "The cowl over your head," which was done in a trice.

The door opened, and the confessor's dun-colored face peered inquisitively into the room: "Are you here, Daniel? Light me to the apartment of your gracious master: for I shall not find my way alone in the dark. But what is the matter with you? Are you sick?"

"I do not feel altogether well this evening; very often something puts an old man out of sorts. But you, what do you seek at so late an hour as this at the Castle?" Thereupon he pressed the confessor before him in order to shut the door.

But the father had already observed the monk,

and asked: "Whom are you entertaining, here in your lodging, Daniel?"

"A mendicant monk bespoke from me an offering."

"Let me give him the salutation, Daniel," said the father, and he made his way into the room, "God bless you, brother Franciscan, or to whatever order you belong."

Philip had with instinctive thoughtfulness placed himself against the light so that his face was in the shadow. He answered in a disguised nasal voice: "I am a Franciscan from the monastery at Fulda."

"And whither do you travel?"

"I am engaged in a pilgrimage to the Holy City."

"God give you his guidance, my worthy brother. I would right gladly make the pilgrimage thither with you. Have you heard on the way of what the people say about the Wittenberg devil?"

"Some call him a devil, and others an angel of God."

"The blinded wretches! Have you, perchance, heard also that he has reviled, with his coarse peasant's mouth, the palace minister of the Holy Father!"

"They say, that Martin Sylvester will have no desire for another contest with the peasant."

"Who says that?"

"People here and there in the inns."

"Take care of yourself, brother Franciscan, and

salute for me the towers of the Holy City." Whereupon the father turned about and left the room.

Philip wiped the cold sweat from his brow and drew several times a deep breath. Now, too, he felt some sharp compunctions of conscience in reflecting on the lies which his exigency had wrung from him; and he lifted his soul in sighs to heaven: "God be merciful to me, and forgive me my sin, for Christ's sake; thou knowest that my soul loves the truth and is averse to every thing which is false."

After a few minutes Daniel came back: "You see my foreboding, Sir Count. Take this as a warning from God to desist from your purpose, and return."

Philip shook his head in token of unwillingness. "You take counsel of your fears, Daniel. On the contrary, it seems to me, that by the coming of Father Speckel the danger has been diminished; for assuredly we are not likely now to encounter the Count. So hasten to the ladies, my good Daniel, for impatience consumes me."

The old man yielded in silence, and did what was enjoined upon him.

Philip meanwhile stepped to the window and looked out. The stars were shining bright and clear in the heavens, and one of them with a mild greenish lustre appeared to smile on him with a special kindness, as if it were the eye of God which

would guide him on his way. His heart dilated freely, he felt an influence soft and sweet in his soul, and all his anguish, his care, his impatience, and his aspiration dissolved in a flood of emotion.

In the adjoining kitchen the chatter of the women had been hushed—Daniel must have prudently sent them away.

The old man at length returned and beckoned silently. Philip accompanied him, with noiseless step and renewed beating of the heart, through long and dark passages, till his guide halted before a door. "Here I will stand and wait for you," he whispered. "But I still beg of you one thing—not to keep me on the rack longer than one hour. Give me your hand upon it."

Philip did so, and the next moment he was pressed to the heart to which his own belonged in pure, holy, and undying love.

All was quiet in the Castle. Only now and then came up from the court a short yelp of a dog or the stamp of a horse in the stable. The Castle was dark except that above in the other wing a light glimmered from the Count's room.

To the waiting Daniel, the minutes seemed hours; his breathing well nigh stopped; and the sweat ran from every pore. In his sixty years of pilgrimage on earth, he had never yet experienced a moment so full of pain and torture; it seemed to him as if he

should die. He wanted to pray, and invoke the aid of all the saints. But he shrank in terror from this thought; and a troubled conscience sealed his lips.

At last, at last the watchman's horn called the next hour. Now barely ten minutes more, and the Count must come. But the ten minutes became twenty; and already Daniel tried by knocking on the door to remind him of his promise, when the door opened and Philip appeared.

"God be praised," gasped Daniel with a fervent tone, and glided forward in silence; not, however by the same way, but through a side-wing of the Castle, from which the drawbridge could be reached more quickly and surely.

The watchman made a wry face on being roused from his comfort for a second time on the beggar's account; but a stern look from Daniel silenced the curse which was already upon his lips.

When once without the precincts of the Castle, Philip grasped the old man's hand with warmth. "May God repay you for this kindness which you have done me. It has, indeed, opened afresh the bleeding wound in my soul, as you predicted. But the sting is taken from the pain after all. I know now that my Margaretta will be more calm, after she has heard from my own lips that my love belongs to her as long as life shall last. My soul, too, will be peaceful."

“To that may the Holy Virgin help you,” said Daniel heartily. “But I will not cease to implore and beseech all the saints that they will incline the heart of our gracious Master so that everything may come to a happy conclusion.”

“Yes, pray, Daniel,” said Philip earnestly. “The effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much. But never mind the saints. Go straight—to Almighty God Himself. He is able to do more than all the saints.”

Daniel looked at him with blank astonishment. “Will that do, then? Dare one attempt such a thing? I also believe that the great God is sitting above, exalted in heaven. But is He not too far above for one of us? and must we not tremble to approach Him? Are not the saints much nearer to us, more accessible, and more kindly disposed to us, than the stern and awful Judge whose eyes are full of fiery indignation?”

“Not so, Daniel,” replied Philip. “It is written: God is love; and again: The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him, He also will hear their cry and will help them.”

“Where is that written, Sir Count? That is a beautiful passage.”

“It is found in the book which the Pope has

bound up in chains, but which Luther is setting free again."

"Luther?" exclaimed Daniel. "But they say that Luther is a heretic. If he has done what you say, he can surely be no heretic."

"He certainly is not, Daniel. He is only accused falsely. He is a witness of the truth."

"Listen to me, Sir Count. If that is the case, then be of good courage."

"Why so, Daniel?"

"Well, because the truth always comes to the light in due time. Then, they will have to desist from execrating Luther as a heretic; and then,—then, our Count will have to be of a different mind."

"O that it might be so," cried Philip, his beaming eyes raised toward heaven; and afterward reached his hand to Daniel once more for the farewell.

The kindly stars beamed on the path of the lonely wanderer. They seemed to him like golden letters which God the Lord had written upon the heaven; and he thought he understood the true sense of this writing, when he read in it the love of God who makes all things work together for good to them that love Him.

CHAPTER XVII.

EVIL COUNSEL.

MOTHER and daughter sat by the light of the candle until far into the night, striving to compose their minds after what had taken place. A light was also burning till after midnight in the window of the tower room in which the Count loved most to pass his evenings.

Here the Count had given a cordial welcome to the Father Confessor, whom he nevertheless reproached for having kept away nearly a whole week. The friar had become more and more indispensable to the Count; and it seemed to the latter as if something were lacking, if deprived of the company of his visitor only for a single day. The Father had excused himself by alleging an accumulation of his official duties. The Count, satisfied with these excuses, had gone to the closet and taken out his chess-board; for his fingers burned for the amusement of which he had been deprived so long. But

the Confessor had held aloof, intimating that he had something of more importance to talk about at this time with his penitent. The Count, therefore, obediently replaced the chess-board in the closet and seated himself at the table with the Confessor.

The altarist now entered upon his inevitable topic, which he handled with untiring persistence, the subject of heresy. Indeed this topic now occupied all other minds as well, and in all places; so that in all the beer saloons and workshops, at all the fountains, and in the public markets, religion was the topic of conversation.

Of late the Count touched upon this subject only with reluctance; for it always reminded him afresh of the sorrow which had fallen upon his house, and the ruin of his domestic happiness, which he felt every day more heavily. For all his repeated efforts to regain the confidence of his wife and daughter had miscarried. He saw himself isolated, and, as it were, a stranger in his own house, and in the bosom of his family. His lovely flower, Margaretta, was visibly withering in silent grief, and his wife growing daily more strange in her inner life; even the other children had had their confidence in their father shaken. Under these circumstances he much preferred that the conversation should turn upon other subjects, rather than on Luther and heresy. Still he accommodated himself submissively, as he always did, to

the will of his spiritual guide, whose person was sacred to him, and his word as it were gospel.

"The times daily grow worse," said the altarist peevishly, "ungodliness gets more and more the upper hand. If the Lord God does not soon interfere, a great overturning may follow: for here, in two contests, has the heretic carried away the victory."

"In two?" exclaimed the Count, surprised by the unwelcome news and interrupting the flow of the Father's discourse.

"Yes, in two," continued the latter with lively nods of the head. "In the first Tetzl was miserably unhorsed in his disputation at Frankfort; and what still increases the disgrace, is this: the thing was done, not at all by Luther himself, but by a beardless youngster whom he had saturated with his thoughts and sent to Frankfort. To be sure this loose bird was immediately secured and put in a cage, where his crowing is likely to be very faint. Yet what good will that do? Luther reaps the fruit of the victory all the same, and our cause has received a heavy blow.

"But this is not the only calamity. Only think of it, gracious Sir Count, even on his eminence the Palace Minister and General Inquisitor of the Holy Father has the rude bear ventured an attack with his claws, and him too has he put to the sword; so that everywhere it has caused a great laughter and

ridicule, almost as bad as in the days when the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum* were published.” — “Sir Count,” continued the altarist after sneezing and coughing, whilst he drew nearer and fixed upon him an intent look, “you see that the beast is not to be checked with the tongue, it will have to be done with the fist.”

Count Eberhard nodded his head slowly in meditation, and said, rather to himself than to his visitor: “Such is also my opinion. Fetters are the fitting thing for a wild beast. Prison and bonds will have to do it. It is the same at any rate as throwing pearls before swine, if we condescend to oppose with words one who audaciously smites the Holy Church in the face. But who is to do it? The Emperor? But he is old and feeble. The Pope? He lives far away and troubles himself precious little about the actions of the ‘Barbarians,’ as he calls the Germans. The only suitable person would be the Prince Elector of Saxony, his liege lord. He could do it; he ought to do it. But alas, him also the bird seems to have bewitched with his song, so that he quietly suffers him to flit about and sing.”

The altarist drummed on the surface of the table with his thick fleshy fingers and bent forward with twinkling eyes. “You are right, Sir Count: from the great princes the heretic has nothing to appre-

hend. Therefore others will have to do it. There are, thank God, still brave and true men, who for the honor of God and the best interests of the Church will venture something. Who were the men that silenced that young hero of the tongue at Frankfort and delivered him into a cloister dungeon? Two nobles of the Mark. These have no more need of absolution now; for this deed so worthy of renown blots out all their sins for time and for eternity."

The Count passed his hand over his brow and asked: "Who are these two?"

"I know not their names, but they are written in heaven; and the jubilee of the heavenly host praises their deed before the throne of God."

"Fortunate men," murmured the Count to himself.

The altarist observed him closely and said, accentuating sharply each word: "Greater happiness will be the portion of him who destroys the principal instrument of Satan."

The Count sighed: "May God soon raise up a man who shall venture such a thing."

"Do you esteem that a great venture?" asked the altarist with a gentle smile of contempt. "Who, then, is this Luther? A poor monk, like that Franciscan at Frankfort, and still further out of the lower ranks of the people."

The Count raised significantly his arm: "But

with a sharp bite and with eyes like flames of fire?"

"Who has told you such a thing?"

"One hears it everywhere and from the lips of all classes."

"Ah that is only the effect of distance, which gives him a fabulous greatness. If seen near at hand, it would shrink away again, and he would be found like any other human being."

The Count answered nothing and gazed vacantly before him like one absorbed in thought. A long silence ensued. The altarist opened his lips repeatedly, but did not succeed in bringing out a single word; till at last in great uneasiness he rose and went to the window. Suddenly, however, he turned about with a hasty resolution, stepped up to the Count, grasped forcibly his arm, and said in an energetic voice: "Sir Count von Erbach, you must do it."

Terror-stricken, the Count releasing himself shrunk back a little way, and, stretching his arm with outspread fingers toward the father, gazed upon him with open mouth and eyes. In this posture he remained for a minute or two, unable either to speak or move. At length, with a mixture of astonishment and reluctance, he asked: "Are you in earnest, Speckel?"

The latter, with entire composure, met the look of the Count and said: "I am thoroughly in earnest.

At first view you may reasonably be startled. Yet will you think otherwise of the matter when I tell my reason for coming to you at this time and so late in the evening too. Three days ago the Holy Virgin appeared to me in a dream, and showed me the heretic bound in a dark dungeon. But you were standing behind him and said: 'Now then, the world has rest from you, base child of Satan.' But the Holy Virgin approached you in radiant glory, with a golden crown in her hand, placed it upon your head and blessed you. When I awoke, behold it was a dream and I thought no more of it. In the following night, however, came the same vision, and afterward the third time. Then I knew that it was no mere illusion, but a revelation from God, as a command and a promise for you."

The Count felt a cold shiver go through his whole frame. All the blood left his face and rushed back upon his heart; and it seemed to him as if his heart would burst. His knees also trembled so that it was difficult for him to stand; and, as if imploring help, he stretched his arms in the empty space: "Lord, send whom thou wilt send; I am not sufficient for so great a work."

The altarist's brow contracted gloomily, his eyes glared with an unearthly expression. "Alas! what a prayer you utter! Do penance for such a prayer, in order that you may escape the chastisement of

God. For a twofold curse will smite him who is chosen to a high and important work and cowardly shrinks back from the call."

The Count seated himself again at the table. His left hand fell at his side as if paralyzed, while the right supported his bended head. "I am willing to do all that tends to the welfare of the Holy Church and my own salvation; this, however, spare me, it is too grave and difficult."

The altarist stood motionless, as if he had been a statue of brass. A still more lurid fire glowed in his eyes. "Sir Count, remember the history of Judith and Holofernes. Judith smote down the head of an enemy of God, and she was a feeble woman. You are a strong man and tremble when called to avenge the cause of God on a much worse Holofernes of our day. But what is it? Do you think, perhaps, that you are required to strangle the heretic? No, only to seize him and put him in confinement. Do you call that too hard? Sir Count, have I been so mistaken in regard to your manhood and heroism? In so many contests have you carried off the victory, and no one could stand against the fury of your sword-cuts; but here do you whine and behave yourself like a child?"

The Count raised himself to his full height and stepped before the father in a commanding posture. "From no other lips would I bear this affront. But

you are my father confessor towards whom I am obliged to restrain my anger and should not forget due reverence. Yet I must acknowledge that you give me pain by such a reproach of cowardice. For truly it is not cowardice which makes me shrink back with horror from such a deed. Give me a knight—for example Franz Sickingen or Ulric von Hutten—whom I am to meet in open field with sword and lance, and I will saddle my horse with courage and alacrity and go with buoyant heart into the conflict. But insidiously to waylay and fall upon an unarmed and defenceless man, and to steal upon my victim from an ambuscade—against that every feeling of my soul recoils, and my knightly honor rebels.”

Now the shock was on the side of the altarist. He felt that he had gone too far and that he must strike another key. Still he understood so thoroughly the art of self-control, that the Count did not perceive his alarm in the least. Approaching the latter calmly, he said in a tone of gentle information: “Passion obscures your clear judgment, noble Sir Count, and I can never assent to your present view. A huntsman uses a twofold method in the chase. The boar he attacks openly with spear and missive weapons, for that animal faces him in the fight. But he has to come upon the fox by stealth and catch him slyly, because the creature flies from him. Is, now, this furtive method of the hunters discreditable

and disparaging to his honor? In like manner each method is allowable for getting the advantage of a heretic; for we ought in every possible way to get him in our power, before the obnoxious plant produces seed. Has not the Holy Church at all times resorted to craft for the purpose of spying out and exterminating the brood of heresy, when open force accomplished nothing? Are not the Dominicans, who are appointed inquisitors, even proud of the signification of their name—*Domini canes*, *i. e.*, dogs of the Lord? But what the Church has hallowed, that will you make a disgrace and think it unworthy of you?"

The Count listened to this speech with surprise and amazement, and could not at once find a reply. The altarist, however, who was deeply versed in reading the countenances of men, saw that a resolution in the Count's mind was preparing and seized the favorable moment to aid it. "There is now, my gracious lord, a tumult in your feelings which confuses your judgment. You will see the matter differently when you have regained your composure. You will then perceive that it is not only the honor of God which demands of you this service, but also your own happiness and safety. For if the heretic is first removed from the stage, the whole troop of his adherents will be speedily scattered like a flock without a shepherd. To him they have sworn fealty, and him they have, so to speak, deified. If they once

see that God does not acknowledge him, they will learn to comprehend that they have followed a false prophet and turn again, heaping curses upon him whom they before blessed. And then?—Well, I will tell you: then one day also will a knight be found knocking at your door, ‘Father, take back again to your favor a wanderer, and restore to him your daughter of whom he made himself unworthy?’ And then—O then will the clouds of trouble and sorrow which overhang your noble soul dissolve; then will your tender father-heart beat freely in the sunshine of a recovered domestic peace, and in the history of the kingdom of God will the name of Erbach shine with ineffaceable lustre.”

During this speech, which was uttered with great warmth, the Count had gradually raised his bowed head and his countenance brightened. “Father Speckel,” he cried, “it is to me as if in your words I have heard the voice of God.”

“O, I was sure of it,” answered the altarist, with carefully suppressed exultation. “I have not been disappointed in you. You are slow and thoughtful in your decisions, because you first thoroughly investigate; but then you also stand firm and never again waver.”

Yet he had exulted too soon. Again he perceived on the Count’s face that same expression of fearfulness and discouragement; he soon learned the cause

of it. "That it has to be done," said the Count, "has now become certain to me. But *how* is it to be done? As soon as this question comes up, my heart fails me again. Wittenberg is distant, and the number of Luther's friends there is great; so that there is little hope of success in an attempt. But if it miscarries, then have I not benefited the cause of God but only brought upon it still greater disgrace; for then will the heretic proclaim triumphantly to the world: 'No one is able to do anything against me, so now you see God is with me.'"

The altarist grasped the Count's hand. "I thank God that He has guided your heart to a right determination. That is the first and highest requisite. Be you only first resolved, and God will surely point out the way and means by which the work is to be carried out. For He knows the plan for all cases. If the report which has come to my ear is true, then are we already relieved of all anxiety. For I have learned from an Augustinian Prior, that a convention of Augustinians is to be held at Heidelberg, at which Luther also has promised to be present. If this takes place, then we have in it an intimation and finger-point from God that He will give the enemy into your hand."

The violent strain upon his nervous system and feelings had so overmastered the powerful nature of the Count, that he was hardly capable of another

thought. "Let us now go to our repose," he said with a tired voice.

In a cheerful state of mind the altarist said good-night to the Count. But he did not think of sleep for a long while. He first prayed an hundred more rosaries, which lasted well nigh two hours, and then sat a while longer absorbed in reflection. Not until near morning did he stretch himself upon the bed without undressing and sink into a kind of slumber. At the first stir of life in the court next morning, he left the Castle, without visiting the Count. He wished to leave him time for his courage to ripen.

Early in the following week he brought the information that Luther would really travel; and he found, to his great satisfaction, the Count firmly resolved. He spread his two hands over him and said in a barytone voice with deep unction: "May God bless the work of your hands, noble Count; O how gratefully will the whole of Christendom look towards the man who delivers the Church from her deadliest enemy; and the Holy Father will hasten to send you the consecrated rose, which ordinarily rewards only the merits of princes and kings. Moreover, in heaven above, the crown of life for you is sure."

CHAPTER XVIII.

SUCCESS TO THE JOURNEY.

“**I**S it really so, that Dr. Martinus intends to travel?” inquired one morning, shortly after the feast of Easter, Frederick, Prince Elector of Saxony, of his confidential friend, the court preacher, Spalatinus.

The person to whom the question was addressed nodded assent with a troubled look. “Much have his friends urged him and besought him to spare himself and not to deliver himself into the jaws of his adversaries. I have also gone to him and implored him by my friendship to remain; for more and more venomous does the hatred of his enemies foam out against him, so that the journey is not without grave scruples. But this Martinus is a remarkable man. Like a knight without fear and reproach, he stands and laughs at our anxiety. Truly, I have never yet seen a man of such faith. He is just

like the idea I have of the Apostle Paul, whom Luther also loves and cherishes above all the other apostles."

This strain pleased the Prince Elector well; for he also had begun to hold Luther in esteem, and to look upon him with reverence as a man in whom all the great qualities were found harmoniously blended in one attractive whole. His fame also resounded more and more distinctly through the world, and made the university of Wittenberg a luminous object, so that scarcely any more room was found for the crowd of students. "Do not restrain him," said the Prince Elector, "for the Lord will bestow His grace upon the journey. Only those hate Luther who do not know him. If they see and hear him for themselves, they will also attach themselves to him. This, however, I lay on your conscience, my good Spalatinus, that you keep an eye upon him, and do not let him be detained and kept away, but return home immediately after the Convention has been held; for we cannot spare him longer from our university. Also he must not go alone: assign him a courier who shall accompany him to Wuerzburg. I myself also will give him a letter of reception to the kastner at Coburg, as also to the Bishop of Wuerzburg and the Count Palatine Wolfgang."

"God reward your Prince Electoral Grace for such kindnesses; and may they also return in copious

blessing upon yourself," said Spalatinus deeply moved; and immediately left his master to appoint the courier.

It was on Monday after Quasimodogeniti, the 11th of April, in the year 1518, that Luther, surrounded by his truest friends and followed by a guide, emerged from the Elster gate of the city of Wittenberg. He was escorted a considerable distance, even to the village of Pratau. Here leave was taken of him, which lasted somewhat long; for the friends found all the time something more to say, or to ask, some of them also had silent tears in their eyes and spoke in a sorrowful tone as if the separation was for good and all, without hope of seeing each other again. They gazed long after him, till he vanished from their sight behind the houses of the village.

While, however, his friends were sorrowful and despondent, Luther himself was very cheerful and buoyant. It was a glorious, sunbright, genial spring-day. Nature revived from the winter slumber, the valleys began to look green, in the meadows golden cowslips were already bursting into flower, and here and there by the way, the blue violet diffused its fragrance, on the willows hung the yellow catkins musical with bees, the larks were already full of the animation of spring, and trilled their songs with artistic skill in the mild atmosphere. The heart of the whole world dilated, and so did that of Dr. Martinus. He drew deep and full inspirations, as though he would sate

himself with the pure, spicy air of spring, and his eyes feasted with a pleasing satisfaction on the prospect.

“How charming the spring is!” he said to his guide, palace attendant of the Prince Elector, Sebastian Rink, whom Spalatin had sent from Torgau. “What a wonderful being after all is our Father God! One does not really know whither to look first and what is most worthy of admiration. Men pass along unconscious, have eyes, but see not; and yet whithersoever one directs his view, he comes upon a wonder of God. Reason can neither understand nor comprehend how it comes to pass, that from a small seed a large tree grows, from a little grain of wheat, which dissolves and perishes in the earth, come twenty or thirty grains. In fact, the earth is full of wonders which are taking place without ceasing. Yet because they are so many, well nigh innumerable, and also are so common, men make no account of them, in fact do not even think about them. Our Saviour Christ once fed five thousand persons with five loaves of bread; and when they were all full, twelve baskets of fragments remained. If now such a miracle should take place, all the world would be astonished and say, as those men did: ‘This is certainly the prophet that should come into the world.’ But that God daily and without ceasing does wonders, carnal hearts do not see and consider, and much less are thankful to Him for it. God the Lord

gives water out of the rock, out of the sand, bread, wine, butter and cheese, out of the earth every kind of plant and fruit, gold, silver, salt and more of the same kind. But men see it every day, and therefore it is no wonder to them. But Thou, O Lord, art a God that doeth wonders; praised be Thy holy name. Alas! for whom, then, hast Thou made all these things? For whom do the birds sing? For whom does the butterfly spread its painted wings? For whom does the forest rustle, and the springs of water gush out? For whom does the grass clothe the earth with its mantle of green, and the waving corn ripen? For whom are cellars and garner richly stored? Is it not for man Thy hand prepares all this? O what is man, that Thou art so mindful of him, or the son of man, that Thou so regardest him?"

By the roadside bloomed a little violet, to which the Doctor stooped down, and with which he talked as with a living being. "O lovely little violet! What a beautiful blue eye you have! you look upon me as though you would speak to me a greeting from the blessed God. What a delightful fragrance you have, as if an angel had kissed you. Yes, and you have really a tear in your eye, too. Have you been weeping? No doubt you have just performed your morning devotion, and your eye overflowed with the Creator's goodness. Ah! He who made you is exceedingly

great. If a man were able to do that—only to make a single violet—one ought to bestow upon him an empire.”

The simple minded Sebastian watched the actions of the great and learned Doctor with mute astonishment, and shook his head with a gentle smile. Finally he said, “Well, Sir Doctor, can you bend yourself over such an insignificant thing? I supposed you would see nothing beyond your books, as the learned gentlemen usually do, who forget the whole world over their yellow parchments.”

Luther said to him with a pleasant smile: “The Lord our God has two books, in which He has written His wisdom and goodness, and in which He reveals Himself as He is. One of these books is Holy Scripture. In it is recorded, in black and white: God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The other book is Nature. It is a picture book with only various colors, green, red, blue, yellow and white. There is also much golden embellishment in it—the lovely stars in the blue firmament, the silver moon, and the sun in royal splendor. There, again, is recorded what a good and loving Father we have in heaven, who fills our hearts with food and gladness, who always cares for us, suffers us to want nothing, or rather opens His loving hand and blesses us above all that

we ask or think. But though He suffer us to want no good thing, we allow ourselves to be wanting in faith or trust, and hang our heads in dark and gloomy care, as if the blessed God had fallen asleep or were actually dead. Really we might well humble ourselves in comparison with the fowls, which our Lord presents as our instructors, that we should follow their example. See, my good comrade! there flies a little bird over us, little to our credit that we might well take off our humble hat to it and say: My dear Sir Doctor, I am really obliged to acknowledge that I have not the skill which you have. You sleep all the night long in your little nest without any care. In the morning you rise again, are cheerful and contented, sit on a branch of the tree and sing praise and thanks to God, after that seek your daily food and find it too. Fie! what have I, weak man that I am, learned that I do not that which I have still so much more cause for? Can the little bird dismiss its cares, and yet has neither field nor barn, storehouse nor cellar; it sings and praises God, is cheerful and contented, for it knows that it has One who cares for it, who is called our Father in heaven.—Why, then, do we not likewise, we who have this advantage that we are able to labor, to cultivate the field, to gather in the fruits, to store up and preserve for our need?—My friends have had a heavy heart in parting from me,

and tried to make my heart heavy too with cares and anxieties. Ah, you dear little bird up there on the bough, I will humble myself in your presence and never be anxious again, but rather believe and trust. O Lord, my heavenly Father, I am in Thy hand; therefore no enemy can have any power against me."

Sebastian said with deep feeling, "Ah, reverend Doctor, how good it is to travel in company with you! What a fine eye you have, that you see what one of us daily stumbles over without seeing it at all. How richly, too, you are able to explain it to one in terms we understand; so that the everyday world begins to be full of life when you throw light upon it."

"O my dear comrade," replied Luther, "I can only lisp and stammer when I speak of God's works; for His thoughts are so high that a created mind cannot find them out, like a mole which would explore a field. But if this terrestrial world has been made so beautiful, rich and glorious, what must be the Paradise which God has planted in the world above. That which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, God hath prepared for those who love Him."

With steadily increasing reverence and devotion did his guide look upon the Doctor. "When you speak of Almighty God," said he, "it has a very different ring from what the priests say of Him.

They portray God like an imperfect man, with a stern, gloomy countenance; and from my childhood up, I have trembled before Him; my heart is glad, and I am no longer afraid; rather I could love Him from my heart."

"Do you really now love Him from your heart, my good friend?" said Luther, laying his hand upon the shoulder of Sebastian. "Still you must not go too fast. True and genuine love proceeds only from a knowledge of sin and a thorough repentance. Do you believe that you are a sinner?"

"Ah, how should I not believe that? I have at least already shed many tears on that account."

"But do you believe also that God forgives sins, and of His grace absolves us freely of all for Christ's sake?"

Sebastian looked at the Doctor earnestly and incredulously. "Freely? All freely? Sir Doctor, is that really so? Yet the priests have never so taught me. Must we not, at any rate, buy off and deserve everything?"

Luther made a gesture of disapproval and waxed warm in his feelings. "Purchase forgiveness of sins! Have you so much gold? Obtain heaven in your own merit! Have you strength enough? If you have not, what then? Then simply lie down in despair."

"Ah, Sir Doctor," continued Sebastian with much emotion, "can you, then, read my soul? How came

you to know, then, that such thoughts have already many times driven me to despair, when I saw that all my virtue was a figment, and all my good works a make-believe, with which I could never appear before God?"

"How did I come by the knowledge! Because you are a man, and all men have a disordered will; so that they are obliged to say with St. Paul: To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. Still, be quite easy, my dear comrade. You must not despair, but believe the Gospel, which points out the help for you. It shows you a man who walked upon the earth pure and without sin, and poured out His holy blood upon the cross. That blood is the redemption price for all our sins. A single drop of that blood outweighs the heaviest guilt. Were you a fratricide like Cain, an adulterer like David, a foot-pad like the thief on the cross—the blood of Jesus would Christ cleanse from all your sins. If you can only believe on Him who came into the world to save sinners, truly and firmly believe, and put your whole trust and confidence in Him; then He gives to you, who have no righteousness of your own, His righteousness and invests you with it as a garment. If, too, invested with such a robe, you appear before God, you are acceptable to Him, and He forgives you all your sins. But if He has given you such a gift, which

is altogether unspeakable—is it not, my dear comrade?—then are you reconciled to Him, and can love Him sincerely and fervently.”

Sebastian looked up wistfully at the Doctor: “Ah speak on, reverend Sir. I cannot hear enough from your lips. Such words go gently and sweetly into my soul, like virgin honey. But do you really know of a certainty that it holds good as you say?”

Luther raised his eyes toward heaven with devout earnestness: “I thank Thee, my dear heavenly Father, that Thou hast graciously revealed it to me by Thy Holy Spirit.” Turning to his attendant, he continued: “Dear friend, I speak of that which I have experienced, and testify of that which has come to pass in my own heart. Not all at once and in a single day did I learn my theology, nor at an easy price; but I had first to go through much doubt and conflict. Before that I also saw God the Lord with your eyes, and His righteousness was to me a word of terror. I also tormented myself with good works and severe penance, if possible to find peace of conscience; but though prostrated again and again from exhaustion and thought to be dying, yet after all I never found that which I sought with so many pangs. Often, when standing before the altar and reading mass, it was with difficulty that I kept from running away from the altar, so great was my fear of God and the sense of my unworthiness. I betook myself from

such torments of conscience to all the patron saints that they might help me. But they answered me not; rather my distress continually increased. Then, one day, Doctor Staupitz entered my cell, where I was again lying stretched upon the ground, as it were lifeless, and moaning: my sins! my sins! my sins! That good man called out to me: 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins. Brother Martinus, you wish to be free from sins, and yet have really no grave sins. Christ forgives flagrant sins, such as parricide, blasphemy, adultery, theft, and the like. These are real sins. You must have a record of actual sins, if Christ is to give you help. You want to be an ideal sinner, and to have an imaginary Christ for a Saviour. You must be content for Christ to be a real Saviour and you a true sinner.' O my dear comrade, it was then in my experience as if a small star shone forth in my darkness. I searched in the Scripture day and night, after I had secretly procured that book from the convent-library, and lo, there I found it written, quite plainly and distinctly written, that God justifies a sinner in Christ by grace, without the merit of works. Then, too, I comprehended what is meant by the righteousness of God: it is the righteousness which God gives to the sinner through faith. For he that believes on the Son, is regarded by the Father as righteous, as it is written: The just shall live by faith."

Sebastian grasped the Doctor by his cowl, and as if he would look through him, said: "That is actually and truly found in the Bible? Ah, then, is all that which the priests say really not true?"

"O, if you only could examine for yourself," exclaimed Luther, "you would then see what men have made of the Word of God."

In this way the conversation was continued, and the two travellers got onward so expeditiously that they took not the least note of the time. At noon they made a halt at a country inn. Sebastian took bread and smoked meat from the wallet, but Luther also drew from his pocket a little flask of red wine, which his friend Lucas Kranach had given him. Wine at that day was a rare drink; only on the tables of the more wealthy sparkled the juice of the grape in the goblets. Burghers, mechanics, and also scholars contented themselves with beer. The artist, Lucas Kranach, was a very wealthy man, and as he was now in high favor at the court of the Prince Elector, he had an ample source from which to draw his supply of wine; for the Prince Elector's butler furnished him liberally from the stores which he procured in the south of France.

Luther in a cheerful temper poured the noble beverage into a goblet which the landlord brought. "Wine maketh glad the heart of man; let us, then, refresh ourselves with the noble gift of God," he

said, and after a fervent thanksgiving drank to his companion. He also ate his food with a hearty relish and was as jovial as if he had been seated at an emperor's table.

Sebastian sat and looked at him intently, as if Luther were a maiden to whom he was about to make a declaration of love. He availed himself of a pause which occurred in the conversation to remark: "Ah, Sir Doctor, you are very peculiar for a pious man. How are you able to be so buoyant and playful?"

Luther looked at him with surprise. "Well now, my dear comrade, do you think that to be pious demands all the time a morose look and sighs, and grief? Verily, when I was still a real monk, my state of mind was always like a gloomy November day, and I thought that laughing was a sin; for I was afraid of God, whom I did not yet rightly know. But now, when I know Him as my dear Father in Christ, why should I still be a peevish fellow and only sigh and groan all the time? Must I not much rather without ceasing rejoice and sing? Is God for me, who then can be against me? Is God my dear Father? well then I am His child; and a child is always of good cheer. Therefore also the Apostle says: Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice."

Sebastian gazed with almost a look of envy on

the Doctor's face, beaming as it was with conscious peace and joy, and said: "Who could be just as you are?"

Luther patted his companion kindly on the shoulder: "Are you not also what I am—a man? Does not the love of God seek you also, as well as me? Only go the way that I have gone, and you, too, will learn to laugh and sing."

After a short rest, they set forward on their way. The first day all went on very well. On the second day, however, the Doctor's limbs began to pain him. He had pored over his books so much, and was so unused to travelling. But within his soul was joyful and made light of bodily weakness, so that his guide had one cause of astonishment after another.

On the third day they reached Weissenfels and found hospitable entertainment at the house of a clergyman. After that in Judenbach they were met by Pfeffinger, the confidential adviser of the Prince Elector, whom they welcomed more cordially than Abraham once did the three angels. Luther was beyond measure genial and attracted all hearts to him. The Prince Elector's Councillor was especially delighted at the playful humor of Luther when he said: "What a good work I have done, by making a rich lord the poorer by a few groschen, such an act may well be repaid me in heaven." Pfeffinger entertained them at the inn.

They now went on to Coburg, and Luther was as merry as a child with delight at the splendid beauty of the Thuringian landscape. He also vied with the birds in many a song among the lofty fir trees. This was a rare enjoyment to Sebastian; for Doctor Martinus had a clear and lovely voice. Their progress, too, became more rapid; for in everything practice makes perfect, so also in travelling.

From Coburg, where Luther delivered a sermon to an unexampled concourse of people, the journey continued to Wuerzburg, the point to which his guide was to bear him company. Luther said: "It is to me a special joy to see the town of Wuerzburg, for there dwells a Bishop who also loves the Gospel. I have, too, in my wallet a letter of commendation to him from the gracious Prince Elector."

On Saturday, when the bells were ringing for vespers, the two travellers entered the fine old city and made inquiry for the episcopal palace.

"Are you Luther?" asked the gatekeeper, as they rapped at the door with the metal knocker.

When an affirmative answer followed, the old keeper opened promptly, and said in a respectful tone: "Enter, then, quickly. His Grace, the Bishop, has received news of your approach, and already the second time has sent to inquire whether you were not yet in sight."

The good Sebastian was very sorrowful as he

reached his hand to the Doctor for the farewell, and said: "If his Grace, the Prince Elector, were here on the spot, I would certainly beg him for permission to go further with you, reverend Sir Doctor. For never in my whole life has my soul been so happy as in your company. Go forward then, in the name of God. I will also pray for you, that you may return home again without injury or peril; for now, all at once, my heart becomes full of despondency and has a presentiment of evil."

"Do you begin to pipe that tune, too?" said Luther, smiling, at the same time shaking cordially the hand of his fellow-traveller. "Be quite easy, my dear comrade—I am just as lighthearted as a little bird in May."

CHAPTER XIX.

ON AN EVIL WAY.

ON the 19th of April in the same year a horseman from the little town of Miltenberg was galloping along the road toward Castle Fuerstenau, and spurring his horse till the sweat ran and the sparks flew. Father Johannes Speckel had given him the strict charge to make the utmost haste in his power.

The horseman was Sir Hans von Kollenberg, one of the feudatories of the Count von Erbach, who had since yesterday ridden all the way from Miltenberg to Wuerzburg as a spy, since it became rumored that Martin Luther was the guest of Bishop Lorenz of Wuerzburg. His espionage, however, had been fruitless; for Luther, conducted by two of the Bishop's servants along a forest path, had entered the town of Miltenberg, and was already two hours in the place when Hans von Kollenberg returned, for whom Father Speckel was waiting in feverish desire. He, too, had to make haste that the Count might receive

timely intelligence; for he was not sure whether Luther would tarry in Miltenberg till the following day.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. In the stables at Fuerstenau twelve horses were standing saddled and bridled; and since an early hour of the morning liegemen of the Count were seen moving about the castle court in full accoutrement. Even yesterday there had been a lively whisper and stir among them; and the Count, too, was thoroughly restless, had not touched food at dinner to-day, and had stood much on the watch tower looking out as though he were expecting some one.

In the Kemnate Countess Maria was standing by the window with her daughter Margaretta. "What can be going on?" said the mother. "This whole day I have seen the men in coats of mail. I wonder if there is some disturbance on foot? I feel anxious lest father has some dispute to settle with Franz Sickingen. I have a feeling of gloom and depression upon my heart, as if some calamity were about to happen. Last night, too, I had very distressing dreams and slept but little."

"Look, there goes father across the court!" exclaimed Margaretta, interrupting her mother's words. "How impulsive his movement and his face so flushed! Poor father, has joy forsaken *him*, too, since the happiness of my life vanished?"

"There comes Kollenberg in this direction," ex-

claimed the Countess, pointing with her outstretched arm towards the castle gate. "His horse is dripping with sweat, and your father is hurrying to meet him. Where can Daniel be, I wonder? I must find out what is on hand, for the pressure of anxiety upon my heart increases all the time."

"I will bring him hither, dear mother," replied Margareta, and was out of the door at the same moment.

"Daniel, what is in the wind!" hastily asked the Countess, addressing the old man as the latter entered the Kemnate.

The servant shook his head ominously, and murmured: "It may be a bad piece of business; for never before have I seen my gracious master in such uneasiness and heat."

Just then was heard the grating noise of the draw-bridge as it was let down, and the horsemen sprang across it in a sharp trot.

They had ridden about an hour when the Count ordered a halt. "Since we do not know into which road Luther will strike—whether down the Main by way of Aschaffenburg, or by way of Amorbach through the Odenwald,—it is necessary to divide our forces into two small bands. You, therefore, Hans von Kollenberg and Echter von Mespelbrunn, ride with six men to the left and station yourselves in the little forest between Woerth and Obernburg

and lie in ambush. If you seize him take him in profound secrecy to the monastery Hoechst. Great, however, will be your reward if you bag the game; I myself will lead the other troop by way of Amorbach."

The troop was divided, and the men rode away in profound silence.

The darkness was already setting in when the Count with his men was trotting over the Eulbach heights, and here and there the people of the village in the valley below were lighting a candle. It was an uncomfortable ride over these heights, which were infested by the robber gentry, and from the lurking places of which Count Eberhard had already made several raids upon the highwaymen. The riders cautiously turned their eyes right and left and had their swords drawn, in order to be ready for any emergency. As yet everything was quiet; only now and then was heard through the forest the screech of a night owl rousing itself to flight.

In his impatience the Count was all the time some distance in advance of his followers, and hastening their speed. As they reached the water-mill on the Mudau, the sounds of a bell were heard in the direction of Miltenberg. The miller, who was just at that moment standing in the door, called out to the Count as he was passing by: "Well, Sir Count, has Luther brought you, too, to your feet? Do you also mean to hear him preach?"

The Count brought up his horse with a pull so sudden and violent that he fairly pranced. "What is that you say? Has any one opened a pulpit to him?"

"Certainly, gracious Sir," replied the miller. "To be sure, the altarist Speckel, your Grace's Confessor, made a violent opposition to the Wittenberg reformer, but without success. The secular priest in Miltenberg, Johannes Drako, is favorable to Luther, and together with the town Council received the visitor with every honor. There has also been all day long a dense throng of people in the city, as if it were a great festival or annual fair."

The Count bit his lips in order to suppress an imprecation, and rode forward without a good-bye. As the road entered a small wood, the Count ordered a halt and allowed his men to come up. "Here is the place where you are to remain lying in wait. But I will ride into the town and seek intelligence. Do not leave this place of concealment until I myself return to you." Thereupon he galloped forward.

The riders dismounted from their horses and tied them to the trees.

"How long shall we have to lie here?" asked one of them a little out of humor. "The night is getting cold, and I feel now already a chill creeping over my spine. The Count might have let me stay at home too; because for three days past there has

been a stiffness in my limbs like lead, as though a sickness were coming on. Samuel, have you not a drink along with you?"

The man addressed shook regretfully his head: "I forgot it. A swallow would really do me good, too, after the sharp ride. It is a disagreeable business, to waylay a poor monk. It is no particular honor for a brave knight to pounce like a footpad upon a defenceless man from an ambuscade."

"Be silent, Samuel," said a third. "You know nothing about it. It is no ordinary monk that we are to catch, and our ride is more endurable than if it were against Sickingen or some such gentleman. You heard the Count our master promise us a handsome reward in case we caught Luther; and the Count always keeps his word."

Colder and colder became the evening; and the horses impatiently stamped the soft moss-covered ground. From Miltenberg the lights glimmered softly through the darkness, and the night cradled the weary earth to sleep. The horsemen, too, could hardly keep their eyes open; but they did not venture to stretch themselves upon the ground. As, however, one hour after another ran on, they resolved to get some sleep, and to leave the watch to one of their number by turns. They might all have slept quietly: for the Count did not come.

CHAPTER XX.

OVERCOME.

THE Count von Erbach had ridden to the little city at a brisk trot. Already at a distance he was struck with the brilliant illumination of the city gate. Over the arch were burning twenty torches, which illuminated, with their glaring red light, an inscription executed in large and uncouth letters:

The word of God by Luther taught
Satan never can bring to naught.

Again the poor horse got the spurs in his flanks, until he panted and groaned.

On the streets of the town the Count was obliged to hold a firm and tight rein; for a densely crowded throng of people obstructed the riding. He soon perceived from the conversation of the people, that they were coming from the church.

“That can be no ordinary human being,” said a cooper; “for his speech sounds like the words of

an angel, and one can comprehend each word he utters."

"Have I not always said it," remarked an old man with a foreign accent. "Have I not always said, that it is no empty invention which my fathers, the Bohemian Brethren, have from generation to generation reported as a prophecy, for consolation in their distress, that Johannes Huss when dying saw a swan which after a hundred years should sing his song and which men should never burn? Truly, if this Luther is not that swan, then I do not know whom we are still to expect. But I will send my son to my brethren in Bohemia, to say to them: Be of good cheer, and fear not; the shame of Johannes Huss shall be turned to honor, and from you also will the curse of heresy depart, for the swan is come."

The hand of the Count convulsively twitched. He would have liked to draw his sword; and the more excited his feelings became, the more completely he became entangled in the throng, and was obliged to hear every moment some new praise of Luther.

At length, with great difficulty, he succeeded in making his way to the inn with the sign of The Sword. The landlord, Nikol Uhrig, who had espied him through the window, was obligingly at hand and helped him from his horse. "Well now, my worshipful Sir Count, are you also in Miltenberg?"

Has Luther bewitched you too? I should never have believed”

“Be silent, old fool,” said the Count in a tone of authority, cutting short the poor man’s exclamations. “Show me, if you please, a room in your house, and prepare me a little supper.”

The landlord started back in terror, and stammered amid polite bowing: “Excuse me, gracious Sir Count! Excuse me, if you please.” He then led the way for the Count, showed him his chamber, and rushed heels over head to the kitchen to prepare the evening repast.

In the course of an hour, as he entered the chamber with a lighted candle and a silver plate for the Count, he found the latter stretched on the bed, in full armor, half asleep. The sharp ride in the air, and the tumult in his feelings, had made him tired.

The landlord crept on his toes to the table, not to awaken the sleeper, set the dish and candle down, and disappeared.

After some hours the Count opened his eyes and looked about in the chamber. He then perceived on the table the supper and tasted it, but it was cold. From this he discovered that he must have been sleeping. The fatigue, however, had now left him. He paced up and down in the room absorbed in thought and muttered softly to himself. It had

become too close for him in the small apartment; he threw open the window and looked out into the night.

Some one has said, that the night is no man's friend; and in this there is also a measure of truth. Under cover of the night, crime makes its stealthy movements and overpowers from behind the unsuspecting; in the night, conscience gnaws, with a fang doubly sharp, the evil-doer; in the night, a sick man feels with twofold weight his malady and sighs for the light of the blessed sun. Yet after all the night has another influence. It has become so calm and quiet on the earth; all the noise of the day is hushed; so many tears are dry in the eyes which are sealed in slumber; so much censure and calumny become silent—all close the weary eyes and seek strength for the labor of a new day. If, too, a soul still wakes, it then finds refuge, after the distraction of the day, in calm and deliberate converse with itself; all the conflict of thought, all the fluctuations of feeling, blend and harmonize; there comes over it a state at once so gentle, tender, and peaceful, that weal and woe seem to mingle in its consciousness and it dissolves in a blissful awe. If, moreover, the silver moon is then in the sky and pours her pale, dreamy light over the sleeping world; it seems as though a heavenly ray were spanning the mighty distance, on which the angels of God are making their silent visits of mercy to earth.

Lost in such dream-thoughts, the Count stood looking out aimless into the night. In his eyes had died away the fierce glow of the preceding day, and a pensive smile played about his mouth. He seemed to have entirely forgotten what had brought him hither. His thoughts were at home with his loved ones. He saw the wan face of his daughter and his dejected wife. Never before had their sorrow cut him to the heart so deeply as to-night, when he was so far away from them. His thoughts went back still further to the time when peace and joy yet fixed their abode in the Castle Fuerstenau, in which he was a happy husband and father. He drew a deep and heavy sigh. "Wherefore is this heartfelt sorrow come upon me? Are the saints inimical to me, that I am so chastised? He felt something moist in his eyes: two great tears had stolen from the eyes of the strong man. Instinctively, as it were, he folded his hands, his eyes were lifted to where the silver moon floated in the clear sky, and one of those prayers ascended to the throne of God which find no words adequate to express them but flow from the heart in unuttered sighs and are often the best of all human prayers.

Long, very long had he stood thus. The watchman's horn had blown the hour again and again—midnight must have been already past.

Just then a light was struck in the corner room

of the neighboring house. "Very likely a sick person is lying there, who cannot sleep," thought the Count who kept his eyes fixed upon the bright object. Yet it was not long until he heard a voice: "Grant this, O God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen."

It was a deep, sonorous male voice, which in the quiet night was quite audible; for the upper window from which it proceeded was quite near. Now, too, the Count recognized the figure of a man who was sitting by the table, turning the leaves of a book over which he bent while he said: "In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me; lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver. O Lord, my God, if I have done this, and there is iniquity in my hands; if I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me, or harmed one who without cause was mine enemy; then let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it, and tread my life upon the earth, and lay mine honor in the dust. Selah. Arise, O Lord, in Thine anger, lift up Thyself above the rage of mine enemies, and help me again in the work which Thou hast entrusted to me, in order that the people may gather themselves to Thee again. My defence is with God, who helpeth the godly in heart. God is a righteous judge, and a God who is angry daily. I will thank the Lord for His righteous-

ness, and will praise the name of the Lord, the Most High. Selah."

The Count now saw the man lay the book out of his hands and bend his knees on the floor. Whereupon the prayer again began:

"O Thou, my loving heavenly Father, Almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Behold, how great is still the distress which at this time has come upon Thy holy Church. How bold are the ungodly in their designs, and open their mouths wide against those who fear Thy name and have delight in Thy testimonies! How fearful and desponding are the little band of the pious, and humble themselves before the might and fraud of the wicked foe! How do the heathen rage, and the kings of the earth take counsel against the Lord and His anointed! Those who are set for guides of the poor people are their seducers, and those who ought to keep watch upon the walls of Zion are lying asleep. Those who should teach pervert Thy holy word, seek their own honor, and strive for earthly gain. The shepherds feed not the flock, but take the fleece. O Thou my God, stand by me against all worldly reason and wisdom, that Thy truth may again shine forth as a pure clear light. Thou seest that I can do nothing without Thee; but through Thee I can do all things, if Thou art mighty by Thy strength in my weakness. Thou must do the work; Thou

also wilt do it, for the cause is not mine, but Thine; otherwise I should very gladly have sat still and sought comfortable repose without any conflicts. The zeal of Thy house hath consumed me that I cannot refrain from bearing testimony of Thee and Thy truth. I put not my trust in men who cannot help me; not even in princes, for they are but dust. I cast myself upon Thee alone; Thou art my refuge continually, my rock, my castle, my deliverer. O my God, be not silent to my prayer. O Thou who art full of compassion, and whose mercy is everlasting, whose ear is ever open and whose heart breaks to Thy creatures, so that Thou must take compassion on them; dost Thou now sleep that Thou answerest me not? Or can it be that Thou art dead? No, Thou art not dead, but art the living God. Neither dost Thou slumber and sleep, Thou faithful keeper of Israel, Thou only hidest Thy face. So will I always call more earnestly and continue instant in prayer. I will not leave off till Thou hearest me from Thy holy place. I do not come trusting in my own righteousness, but in Thy manifold and great mercy, which Thou hast promised us in Christ Jesus. He is my intercessor and advocate, behind Him I place myself, to Him I cleave in faith; therefore, Thou canst in no wise thrust me from Thee, because then must Thou reject Thy well beloved Son. Behold, willingly I

would lay down my life, if it were requisite to the honor of Thy name and the welfare of Thy kingdom; would even like the holy martyrs sing a hallelujah, if my blood is demanded; for I know that the blood of Thy witnesses is precious in Thy sight, and Thou plenteously rewardest those who are faithful unto death, according to the word of Thy dear Son: Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lay down his life for My sake, the same shall keep it unto life everlasting. O Lord, my soul is submissive to Thee, and my heart rejoices in God, my Saviour. Thou art my dear Father in Christ Jesus, and I am Thy child in faith. I am permitted to tell Thee everything, and Thou hearest me; Thou understandest my thought afar off, Thou art attentive to my muttered sighs. Away from me, all ye mine enemies and persecutors; the Lord hears my cry, the Lord accepts my prayer. Goodness and mercy shall follow me all my life long, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Amen."

After these words the man arose from his knees and extinguished the light.

The Count von Erbach was standing with folded hands; his heart praying in unison with every syllable. The words of prayer had taken him as it were by storm and carried him along with them. He was filled with the awe of a holy devotion and could not

again escape its influence; for more and more earnest was the tone of entreaty, with increasing assurance did the filial trust of the suppliant fasten itself upon the throne of the heavenly grace, as if already certain of an answer. What words were those? Never yet had he heard any man pray thus—with such lowliness and with such confidence as well. It was not the words alone which took such hold of him; it was especially the tone, which sounded so different from the customary one of the rosary prayer. Just as a child speaks with its father, so spoke the man with Him whose name is holy, who dwelleth in light, which no man can approach unto, before whom earth and heaven bow and at whose wrath created things do tremble. What sort of man is that, who takes upon himself to speak thus with the King of kings? Is it not presumption? Is it not blasphemy? Oh no; such is not the tone of his voice. One might think he heard a child talking—so lowly and submissive, so heartfelt, so full of trust and joy! Oh what sort of a man is it? He must be a saint, a prophet of God, not inferior to St. Bernard or St. Boniface.

In the heart of the Count burned a flame which threatened to consume him. He did not know how it came about. He was drawn to the man whom he had heard praying, by a secret and powerful attraction; and would have liked to clamber over the roof

and through the window immediately. "God be thanked," he said at last, "that I came to this inn for lodging to-day. God has sent such a man in my way, that he may set me apart by his blessing for the pious work I have in hand."

He stood at the window for a long time yet and dreamed, till at length weariness threw him on the couch. He fell into a deep sleep, and dreamed of the praying man, and heard his word of benediction.

As he awakened at the dawn of day, he summoned the landlord, who entered promptly with a flagon of hot beer. The Count abruptly addressed him: "Go immediately into your neighbor's house and say to the landlord, that I would like to come and have some conversation with the man who is lodged in the corner room up there."

The landlord eyed the Count with a dubious and inquisitive look, in fact a question was already upon his tongue; but the recollection of the Count's outburst of anger last evening, at the mention of Luther's name, stopped the words upon his lips. He left the room with polite gestures, and muttered to himself, with repeated shakings of the head, as he descended the stairs: "How did he find out that Luther had established his lodging with the Syndicus? What can he want with Luther? It will be well if he only has no sinister purpose; for he is not favorable to the Wittenberg Professor."

While the Count was still sitting at breakfast, the smiling face of the landlord, who had performed his errand with despatch, appeared in the door with the answer: he had not found the landlord, but had therefore gone himself to the guest; and that the latter was awaiting the visit.

The Count instantly rose and left the hot beer standing half drunk. He girded on his sword, placed the helmet upon his head, and, followed by the anxious gaze of the landlord, betook himself with heavy, clanking step to the neighboring house.

In a small, brown wainscoted corner, use, richly furnished and perfumed with the odor of flowers—the guest-chamber of the respectable merchant's house, he found a monk in the black cowl of the Augustinians, with thin, pale cheeks, but with eyes of wonderful expression, and a very remarkable play of intelligence upon his thoughtful countenance, which is the token of a man of special distinction and of high character, so that one is instantly imbued as it were with devotion and veneration. One feels that he stands in the presence of a great man.

Deeply affected with such a feeling, the Count remained standing in the door of the chamber, till the monk, with a pleasant smile, advanced to him, and extending his hand, asked what service he could render him.

By the tone of voice and the whole manner and

spirit of the monk, were the sympathies of the Count touched and his heart drawn towards the man; and yet a feeling of diffidence held him bound—a reverence for the man whom he took by his prayer for a saint, and he therefore hesitated to grasp the offered hand. “Reverend Sir,” he began at length with some difficulty, “excuse me, if you please, that I break in upon your retirement at this early hour. Yet you may blame yourself for it. Last night I heard your words, which rend my heart and leave me no rest till I see and speak with the man who can pray in that manner. You must surely be a special friend of God and a saint; for you speak with the Lord of heaven in the confiding spirit of a child to its parent. Such a man may be capable above all others of giving me a blessing for the work which I this day hope to perform in the name and for the honor of God.”

“Ah, Sir Count,” replied the monk, “why do you call me holy? No one is holy except God alone. We men, however, all eat bread through the grace of our God, and even the best of us may only come to God through his grace and merciful kindness. We are all alike sinners and destitute of that which would make us acceptable to God. But, nevertheless, if you desire my blessing I will certainly give you the same; provided your purpose be really a work of piety and performed for the honor of God.”

The features of the Count became animated. "Undoubtedly it is such," he answered; "for I wish to render a great service to the holy Church, and help her out of her great need and peril."

The monk looked up surprised. "Such language is delightful to my ears, Sir Count. This is really the longing and prayer of all devout Christians, 'Is there no balm in Gilead for the bleeding wounds of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ? Is there no physician there who could heal that which is torn?' Sir Count, if you are the man who has such a balm, ah then, may you be blessed in the name of the Lord!"

Count Eberhard involuntarily bent his knees and felt the hands of the monk upon his uncovered head. It seemed to him as if a power streamed upon him from those hands, animating him with life and fire.

When he had risen again, the monk said to him: "Now disclose to me also your enterprise, so that I can accompany you on your way with my prayers. Or is it a secret, which cannot be entrusted to the knowledge of another?"

The Count responded: "It is, indeed, known only to a few trusty persons; and after it shall have been accomplished, requires also that no one shall find out who performed the deed. But you ought to know it, for my heart inclines to you with unconditional confidence. Know, then, reverend Father:

I am from the Odenwald, the Count Eberhard von Erbach, and have ridden hither to Miltenberg in order to seize the ferocious wild boar which lays waste the Lord's vineyard, and has also brought unutterable sorrow into my house, since by infecting with his heresy he has made my expected son-in-law, Count Philip von Rieneck, unworthy of the possession of his bride, and estranged the father from his daughter and the husband from his wife."

The monk listened; a brief smile passed over his face, which the count, however, did not observe, and meanwhile continued: "My Father Confessor, whose word is to me as the voice of God, has solemnly enjoined upon me to remove from the sphere of action the Wittenberg heretic, Martin Luther; for if the root of a noxious plant is plucked up, no seed can fall from it. Be so good then, reverend Father, as to pray for me, that the heretic Luther may to-day fall into my hands."

During these words, the monk had made a movement, his smile had settled into a deep earnestness, and also his face had become a shade paler. As the Count finished, Luther approached a step nearer to him and said, with a tremulous voice: "Behold, your prayer is already heard; God has given your enemy into your hand—I am Luther. Here I stand before you, a defenceless man—do to me as it seems good to you. I am the Lord's servant; if it is

determined in His counsel that I fall through your hand, let His will be done."

A brief clanking was heard in the chamber. Count Eberhard, the strong man, was so startled that sword and coat of mail rang with the shock. Then followed a long silence. The Count stood motionless, and his heart died within him, as if it had been stone.

Luther also moved not from the spot. Meek and resigned he stood there, his hands folded on his breast, and his eyes cast down toward the floor.

At last life came again into the Count; but his cheeks were pale and his eyes without lustre; his voice, too, had entirely lost its ring, and he said: "Luther is a bad Christian, a child of unbelief and impiety, a pest of corruption—you cannot, therefore, be Luther; for your heart is pure and clean, as that of a saint, your faith is sure and clear and your prayer as of a genuine child of God. Tell me, then, the truth: you are not, you cannot be Luther."

A gentle smile now stole upon the monk's lips: "And nevertheless I am Luther, Martinus Luther of Mansfeld, Augustinian monk and Doctor of the Holy Scripture at Wittenberg. If you do not believe it on my word, then I will call my excellent host, Sir Zacharias Eppelein, who will tell you the same."

The Count raised his arms in the air and folded his hands with still troubled features, and cried,

speaking rather to himself than addressing another: "Ah, now I understand you, Philip! There fall from mine eyes, as it were scales. Oh, was I then smitten with blindness? How could I so long withstand the truth? Philip—O—Philip, my son, what a wrong I have done to you! Now I know and understand your meaning, when you said: Father, you call him a heretic, because you do not know him. If you had seen him only one single time, you would—"

He broke off, overcome by his emotion, and recalling to mind that Luther was actually standing beside him, he grasped with a convulsive pressure both the hands of the monk, let them go immediately, however, in alarm and said with a shudder: "Reverend Father, I am not worthy that the light of your eyes should fall upon me. I was in the very act of committing a most shameful and accursed deed. I nevertheless thank God that it has occurred; for God knows how to bring good out of evil. My sinful purpose has guided me to you, so that I saw you face to face and overheard your prayer. Now I know that he who was regarded as an emissary of hell is a messenger of God and an anointed servant of the Lord. O how the truth becomes falsehood, and falsehood truth! Holy man, once already I craved for myself your benediction; now I entreat it a second time. Bless me, reverend Father, bless me for

the perception and acknowledgment of the truth, that my soul may become free from the dominion of error and of superstition."

For the second time the Count knelt down, and felt as it were a thrilling sensation of bliss run through his frame as Luther, with an elevated and almost prophetic and inspired voice, spoke: "The people that walked in darkness saw a great light, namely the light of Thy holy Gospel, O Lord of hosts, and the sheep which had gone astray come again to Thy fold, Thou great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, O Lord Jesus. Behold, the time cometh, said the Lord of hosts, when the blinded eyes shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, and shall be filled with the knowledge of God and of His Anointed. A new time shall dawn and a new spring bloom in the valley of the shadow of death. Amen. Help, blessed Lord God! Amen."

The Count's chain coat of mail became too tight for him. He loosed with trembling hands the belt and opened the coat of mail, that he might breathe more freely. His eyes were fixed immovably on Luther. He could not satisfy himself with looking at the unique and wonderful man. All at once, as if in an ecstasy, he cried: "Ah what will you say, you dear ones at home, when I come and bring you the blessed news? You, too, what will you say when Count Eberhard knocks at your door and humbly

begs: Your hand here, Philip, in order that you may again be my son; and your heart here, that I may feel whether it can still have love for the destroyer of your life's joy."

Luther interrupted him: "You mentioned the name Philip, my very dear Sir Count; did you not a moment ago call him Philip von Rieneck?"

The Count replied in the affirmative.

"I know that person very well," continued Luther; "for a thirst for truth impelled him to come to Wittenberg. A dear and worthy man he is in my estimation, and I prize him as a friend, the youth with a lofty and noble intellect, and a pure, devout, and childlike heart. Take him a salutation from me, if you see him, and also my blessing."

The Count's thoughts and feelings now drew him to a distance: his heart was too full. Accordingly, after requesting Luther's writings, he took his leave; and Luther dismissed him with the heart-affecting words: "Go hence in peace, esteemed Sir Count! He who has begun the good work, will also carry it on according to His good pleasure. If God will, you are yet to see greater wonders than that He breaks swords and snaps asunder spears. His word can no man quench, it abideth for ever."

The Count had his horse saddled and rode swiftly away.

When he came to his men in the pine wood, where

they had been already joined by the other band, he made a sign to them while yet at some distance, and said: "Go home in peace—the word of the Lord endureth for ever." Thereupon he rode past them in the direction of Fuerstenau.

The troopers looked at each other in astonishment. "What is the matter with the Count? Has he lost his senses?"

But while they were still talking together in perplexity about the matter, the Count suddenly returned to them and said: "No, not home at present; hasten into the town, ride behind Luther as he goes to Heidelberg, and see well to it that no harm befall him. If he ask you what you want, say to him that Count Eberhard von Erbach sent you."

CHAPTER XXI.

A HAPPY HOUSE.

“**I**NCREDIBLE news I bring you, Sir Count! A company of horsemen are coming up the Castle Hill, at the head of them is the Count von Erbach!” With these words, uttered in a broken way for want of breath, old Jonathan rushed in to his master in the stable, where he was in the very act of mounting his horse.

Count Philip von Rieneck turned round abruptly to ask a question, when a new messenger hastened to him with the same news.

The Count stood motionless for a moment, his whole body paralyzed as it were, till the harsh grating of the castle gate aroused him. Over the lowered drawbridge rode, with a thundering tramp, ten mounted men into the castle court. Count Eberhard, who rode at their head, ordered a halt to his men and hastened with a friendly greeting to Philip, who was quite embarrassed to know what manner he

should assume. In a moment Count Eberhard had dismounted and beckoned Philip into the castle without speaking a word.

With a thousand torturing thoughts, in alternation between fears and hopes, Philip silently followed the Count till they had entered a quiet apartment. Here Count Eberhard opened wide his arms and in a voice, such as Philip had never before heard from him, said: "Come to my heart, my son."

Not knowing what to make of it, the young man threw himself upon the breast of the Count, and a solemn, holy stillness brooded over two hearts which beat in unison.

After a long time, Count Eberhard held Philip at arm's length from him, so as to be able to look him directly in the face. "My son, I have two greetings to deliver to you. One of them is from your own Margarett; the other is from Dr. Martin Luther."

Philip disengaged himself. His heart was ready to burst: "Sir Count, my soul is wounded and sore unto death. O do not practice any cruel sport on me! Yet you could not trifle with me. You have the manner of one who is in literal and sober earnest. But how am I to understand your words? O speak, I pray you, and relieve me from the rack of suspense."

"My son," repeated the Count in a tone which deeply touched the heart, "raise your eyes to hea-

ven in heartfelt thankfulness. The God who turns the hearts of men as the water-brooks, has done great things for you. He has opened the blinded eyes that they see; he has broken the hard hearts that they weep. My son, I stand before you as a penitent. I have, in my blindness, brought heavy guilt upon myself, plunged my wife and child, and also you, into sorrow and wretchedness. At home, however, I have already sought and obtained forgiveness; now come I to you, that a like blessing may befall me from you."

Philip pressed his folded hands upon his breast, which heaved with emotions too big for utterance, and which no words were adequate to express; and in his eyes Count Eberhard read what he desired. In his eager happiness he drew Philip near him on a seat of repose. There sat the two men well nigh two hours, and the old Count told his story, the young Count interposing occasional questions, and the aged Jonathan, for once doing violence to his instincts of propriety, acted the listener. He had clasped his withered hands devoutly and was weeping like a child.

I now see plainly that the kind reader is scarcely able to wait until the time arrives when the door of the Kemnate in the Castle of Fuerstenau will be thrown open to his view. The dear feast of Easter was past, but in Fuerstenau there was this year a

twofold solemnity. How quickly under the rays of God's sun were the withered flowers able to bloom again and diffuse their fragrance! Overmuch bliss may, perhaps, have a fatal effect in many cases. But it is only weak natures which will sink under it. Margaretta's heart was great and strong, a genuine branch of the Erbach stem. It had been nerved and tempered in trouble; therefore also could it sustain no harm in happiness. Her own daily prayer was now: "Lord, give me not too much of earthly joy, that I may not forget Thee."

.

The waves of the Reformation rose higher and higher daily. They beat vehemently against the throne of the German Emperor, so that he was obliged to arise and take a position in reference to the mighty movement. At Worms, in the year 1521, the Emperor Charles V. sat in a hall, surrounded by the flower of the German nobility. In one point was concentrated the world power which then existed in the holy Roman Empire of the German nationality. Confronted with this awe-inspiring array of earthly might stood a monk, clad in a mean black cowl, a poor monk who was required to confess before the Emperor and empire: "I have been in error; I have offended the Pope and done harm to the Church of God; I recant and give up all my books to the flames."

In the utmost tension of expectation, in the consciousness that the present moment is a turning point in the world's history, are the eyes of all the princes fastened upon the monk, who stands erect in the midst of the hall, grasping the Bible in one hand while the other is lifted in solemn appeal to heaven. At first his voice is gentle, with a certain tinge of sadness; but very soon he entirely regains his accustomed firmness, louder and more majestic resound the words, more full and powerful the tones float away, like a mountain torrent which carries with it boulders and the trunks of trees, or the tempest which upheaves the mighty oaks; until, as a trumpet blast, ring out the words of the prophet: "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, God help me, Amen."

A profound sensation, a mighty stir is felt in the hall. The Emperor is in a state of furious excitement; his face glows like fire and his right hand is raised in a threatening posture. The princes around him are pale with rage and fear. But here and there also is an animated expression of the eyes, a suppressed applause, or a nod of approbation and encouragement. O, the monk stands not alone, friends are standing by his side, friends whom he has already long known, and friends whom he has won for himself to-day.

There behind the columns we perceive a face already known to us—Count Eberhard von Erbach.

He has hung, the whole time, with breathless anxiety, upon the lips of the monk—he, one of the truest and most faithful. Now, when Martin Luther is about to be conducted out of the hall, he presses forward to him. He must stand by his side, in case any danger befall him.

Luther recognizes him at once, and extends to him his hand with his face lighted up: "You here, too, my much loved Sir Count?"

"Reverend Father," replied Count Eberhard deeply moved, "Where Martin Luther is in danger, there must Count Erbach not fail to be."

"God reward and bless you for such fidelity," was Luther's reply. "But be without any solicitude, my dearest Count: my defence is with God."

.

The spring of the year 1522 opened, and the snow-drops welcomed its arrival. Up there in Castle Fuerstenau it was also green and blooming with a new and pure life, but not in the gardens alone. The men also were arrayed in festive apparel—from the lord of the Castle down to the very lowest servant and humblest maid. "This is the day which the Lord has made for us; come let us rejoice and be glad therein." So it was clearly depicted in every countenance. Long, long had they waited for this day—that those might be joined together by the hand of the priest whom God had long since united

in heart. This day had been so long deferred, both by the wish of the young people themselves and by the advice of the parents, in order that the tender bud Margareta might first bloom in full maturity and virgin strength. Besides it was desired that a work might be completed, of which Count Eberhard had laid the foundation stone a year and a half before. For he wished to erect, on the site of the demolished chapel of the castle, a new edifice in which the Triune God should be worshipped in new tongues. Philip had returned successful from Wittenberg, whither he had gone for the purpose of witnessing on the spot—the new order and mode of divine service, and also to request from the Reformer a clergyman after his own heart. He brought one such with him—the former altarist Johann Speckel, who after the mighty effect of the Gospel on Count Erbach was not much longer able to resist the convictions of truth, and in Wittenberg had received a consecration for the ministry of the Gospel.

The bell rang out from the tower, and across the castle court moved a long, solemn procession, and halted before the altar of the little church. But on the steps knelt two blessed of the Lord, who were to receive a new blessing from the hand of everlasting compassion.

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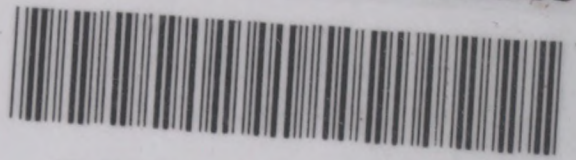
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